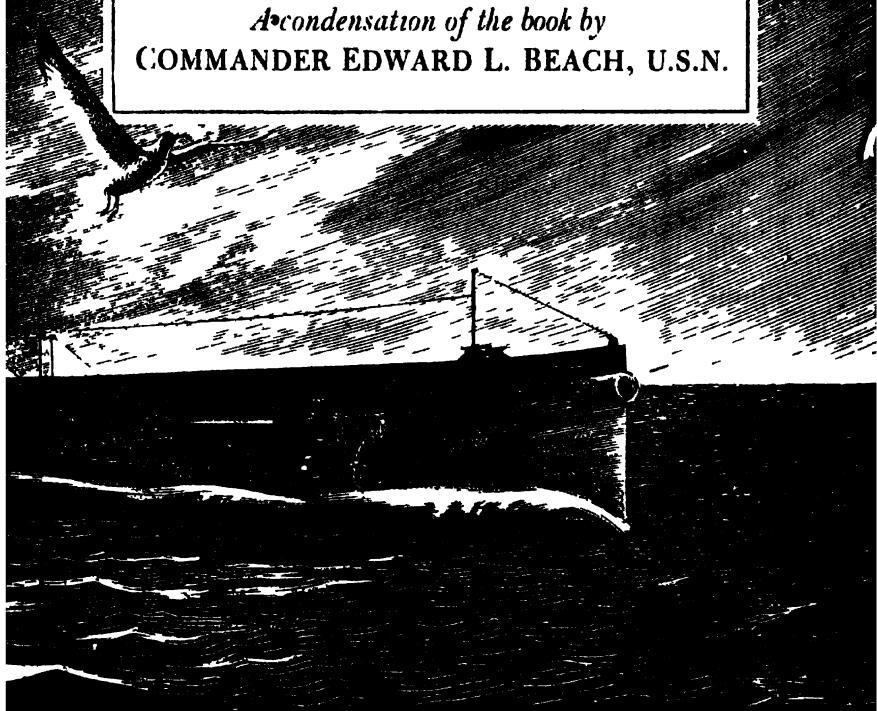


Wood Engravings by George and Augustus Smith

RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP

A condensation of the book by
COMMANDER EDWARD L. BEACH, U.S.N.



"Run Silent, Run Deep" is published by Allen Wingate, London

THIS AUTHENTIC, stirring novel tells of a little-known operation of the Second World War—the harrying of enemy shipping by submarines in the Pacific. Himself a submariner, Commander Beach begins his story just after Pearl Harbour and paints a vivid picture of an American submarine crew as they make their daring attacks under the very noses of the enemy and combat the uncanny skill of the dreaded Japanese destroyer captain, “Bungo Pete.” Behind these gripping scenes of action there also lies a deeply moving human drama of the submarine commander torn by conflicting forces of duty, friendship and love.

“Continuously exciting. . . .”

—*Times Literary Supplement*

U.S. NAVY DEPARTMENT

Washington, D. C.

In reply refer
to number
N/P16/2117

From The Director, Broadcast and Recording Division
To The Officer-in-Charge, Security and Public Information
Subject Commander E J RICHARDSON, U S Navy,
tape recording by
Reference (a) Article 1074(b) BuPers Manual
(b) SecNav Memo of 11 Aug
Enclosure (A) Transcript of subject recording

1. A transcript of a tape recording made by Commander E. J. Richardson, U S Navy, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honour on August 30, is forwarded herewith as enclosure (A)

2 It is not believed that subject recording can be of use during the forthcoming Victory War Bond Drive mentioned in reference (b) without severe condensation of the material Subject failed to confine himself to pertinent elements of the broad strategy of the war, and devoted entirely too much time to personal trivia

3 Subject to the foregoing comments a verbatim transcript is forwarded for review In accordance with provisions of reference (a), subject tape will be retained for such future disposition as may be directed

S. V. MATTHEWS

CHAPTER 1

MY NAME is Edward J. Richardson and I am a Commander in the Navy, skipper of the submarine *Eel*. They said I was to tell the story from the beginning, about the Medal of Honour and what led up to it, and that's a big order. The story is as much about Jim Bledsoe and *Walrus* as it is about me, and it starts long before *Walrus* left New London. It begins on the old *S 16* one frigid day just after Christmas 1941, and it includes Laura Elwood, Jim's fiancée, and Bungo Pete, a Jap destroyer skipper

We were out in Long Island Sound making practice approaches in the freezing weather for Jim's qualification for command of submarines. The war had begun nearly three weeks before.

At the time I'm talking about, I was a senior Lieutenant. *S-16* was my first command. She was a World War I "S boat," and her engines, copied from German designs, could never be made to run properly. The Navy had finally put her in moth balls, and when in the spring of 1941 they decided to shake up *S-16's* old bones she had been labelled "junk" for fifteen years.

Jim Bledsoe, my Executive Officer on *S-16*, was also a full Lieutenant. He was tall, bronzed and good looking; two inches taller than my five feet eleven. He was a product of Yale's Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps and had been in the Navy two and a half years, mostly in the Submarine Service. I had passed out from the Naval Academy six years before and had nearly three years more than Jim in submarines.

Jim was of inestimable help in turning the old rust bucket we found in the Philadelphia Navy Yard back into a submarine. With Keith Leone, an Ensign, and old Tom Schultz, a one time Machinist's Mate, now a Lieutenant (junior grade), the officer complement of the *S-16* was complete—and busy. We were all new at our jobs. Even Tom Schultz, though he had had sixteen years of enlisted service, had just received his commission.

All spring and summer we worked madly on our old pig of a submarine, crawling about in filthy bilges, racing against we knew not what, for there was an unmistakable urgency in the air. Jim took to the job of organizing our gradually accumulated crew. Keith, a graduate of Northwestern University, fresh from Reserve Midshipman School and submarine school, became Torpedo Officer. Tom, of course, became Engineer. My last job had been Engineering Officer of the submarine *Octopus*, so I concentrated my spare time on finding out what the basic design trouble with *S-16's* engines had been. With a little good luck, and the assistance of the Engineering Design Department of the Navy Yard, *S-16* ran better after we got her back together than she had ever run.

She had been on the run ever since, logging more miles, more dives and more hours submerged in the ensuing six months than in her whole first commission. You would have thought she was the only submarine in New London, the way the submarine school, to which we had been

assigned, kept us going. We were not even allotted normal upkeep time. When the accumulated list of urgently needed repairs began to approach the danger point, I protested to Captain Blunt, our Squadron Commander, with the result that the school at last allotted us two weeks of "upkeep"—to our disgust, over Christmas and New Year's Day. Even this had now been interrupted for the tests involved in qualifying Jim for command.

Jim, eager, alert and ambitious, had already earned a reputation as a "natural" submariner. Normally an officer with only two years of submarine service would not have been considered for a command billet, or even for qualification for command, but the war had already changed a lot of things. An interview I had with our Squadron Commander, Captain Blunt, had kicked the whole thing off nearly a week before.

Captain Joseph Blunt was short and spare, and he looked and acted his name. Everyone in the submarine force knew that diesel fuel ran in his veins instead of blood. His weakness was "the boats"—and he had no use for any man who did not feel the same way. When he sent for me that Tuesday morning, he started true to form, shouting questions at me the moment I opened the door of his office. "Richardson," he barked, "what about your Exec? Do you think he's ready for command yet?"

The question caught me by surprise. "Why, I haven't thought much about it, Commodore," I answered. "He's an excellent officer, but still very junior——"

"He's a Lieutenant, too, isn't he? Anyway, his rank makes no difference if he knows his business. I've a particular reason for asking you. He's your responsibility, you know."

I could think of nothing more intelligent to say than a non-committal "Yes, sir!"

The Squadron Commander waited a moment, and clamped a well-chewed pipe between his teeth. "Did you know that our submarine-production target has been tripled for next year? Does that mean anything to you?"

This was the first time I had heard this piece of news. "We'll need more qualified submarine personnel," I ventured.

"Do I have to draw you a diagram, Richardson?" Blunt cracked out. "Just where do you expect we're going to find the skippers for these new boats?"

"You mean me?" I stuttered.

"Precisely. I've received a request from the submarine detail desk—and this is all private information, understand—to nominate officers from my squadron for the new boats under construction at the Electric Boat Company here and in the Portsmouth and Mare Island Navy Yards." Old Joe Blunt looked me right in the eyes, the way he did when he was really putting a man on the spot. "But I've also got to keep this training squadron going. Now do you see why I asked you about Bledsoe?"

"You mean," I said, "if Jim can take over the *S 16*, I can be nominated for one of the new fleet submarines?"

"That's about right, Rich. You've been doing well with the *S 16*, and I think you should have your chance now. But unless Bledsoe can take over the *S-16*, I'll have to hang on to you a while longer."

Captain Blunt was telling me, as clearly as he knew how, that he would back me up in giving the *S 16* to Jim, but that doing so was my responsibility. That was the crux of the matter, for I was morally sure that Jim, despite his extraordinary aptitude in certain phases of the *S 16's* work, was not yet ready for an independent command. There was a certain immaturity—a devil may care attitude—almost recklessness, about him. It was just a hunch, more than anything else on my part, that he needed more seasoning.

I began slowly. "Bledsoe is not yet qualified for command——"

Captain Blunt slid himself forward on his chair, hands placed on its arms as though he were about to rise. "Why don't you talk it over with him and think about it. Let me know tomorrow."

I rose. "Aye, aye, sir," I answered, and beat my retreat.

All the way back to the refit pier alongside which *S-16* was moored I wrestled with the pros and cons. The idea of having command of one of our newest, most powerful submarines was tantalizingly attractive. The new boats carried ten torpedo tubes and a total of twenty-four torpedoes, as compared with only six tubes and sixteen fish in the *Octopus*. They were bigger, built to dive deeper, and had a considerably longer cruising range.

The skippers of the fleet boats were the élite of the submarine force. When they spoke up in the squadron or division councils, or before the Admiral, their words carried weight. Some day, naturally, I had hoped

to join their number. Now, because of the war, the dream of any submariner's career was practically at hand. All I had to do was to turn the *S-16* over to Jim.

But there was the fact that I owed something to the *S-16* and her crew. It would be unthinkable to leave them in charge of anyone not fully competent to be in command.

Stepping close to the edge of the dock, I looked over the short, angular profile of the ship to which, until an hour ago, I had felt virtually wedded. Now she looked small, puny and tired. The only mission she would ever have in the war would be to train submarine-school students. She could never expect to go anywhere or do anything worth-while; just spend the war going in and out of port, carrying trainees.

Then the deciding argument flooded my brain. The fleet boats were going into war and danger. Suppose Captain Blunt were to misunderstand my motives for choosing to stay with the *S-16* instead of taking a fleet boat. For that matter, how could I myself be sure of my motives in hesitating?

My head was spinning as I climbed down into *S-16's* torpedo-room and made my way aft to where Jim was working in the ward-room. He was deep in sorting out work requests and job orders, comparing one with the other and making three piles which he had labelled "Will be Done," "Fight For" and "Next Time." No doubt about it, he knew how to be an effective Executive Officer. I beckoned him into the tiny state-room which he and I shared.

"Jim," I said, "have you thought much about qualification for command?"

Jim looked startled. "Of course. You have to be qualified before you can have your own boat."

I grinned at him; but inside I was in a turmoil. This was casting the die. "Well, I'm recommending you today."

A succession of emotions crossed his face. "You're kidding! I thought I was too junior——"

"Not any more." I sank down on my bunk and leaned back.

Jim looked at the deck, shifting his weight uneasily. "When the Commodore sent for you, is this what you talked about?"

"Nope." I forced another smile.

"I'll bet it was, though." Jim kicked the side of my bunk impatiently,

jack-knifed his length into the desk chair and reached for a cigarette "Know what I heard yesterday? We're going to start a big submarine campaign against the Japs."

I put both hands behind my head. "What's so surprising about that? It's what the submarine force was built for."

"I mean against the Japanese merchant marine. We've been training to fight warships and to act as fleet advance scouts and all like that. That's why the big boats are even called 'fleet submarines.' Now they're going to send us against the merchant ships, just like the Germans have been doing."

"Maybe so. What's that got to do with your qualification?"

More quick puffs. "Don't you see? We'll have to build a lot more boats. Everybody who has a training boat now will get one of the new fleet boats. All the fleet-boat skippers who have made a few war patrols will become Division Commanders, and all the Execs of these river boats, like me, will move up to skipper!"

I was immediately on guard. "Where did you hear that?"

"Oh, it's all over the base. I'll bet"—here Jim took a deep drag—"old Blunt told you to qualify me, didn't he?"

"No such thing, Jim." I hoped the lie sounded convincing. "A Squadron Commander can't do that anyway."

"No, but he can make some pretty strong suggestions. I'll bet he told you to get me qualified so I could take over somebody's boat when he leaves—come on now, didn't he?" Jim's face lighted with pleasure. He rushed right by my beginning remonstrance. "They'd probably even give me the S-16—you'll be leaving pretty soon, you know!" Excitedly he stubbed out his smoke. "What do I have to do?"

"Well," I hesitated, "I imagine the Squadron Commander will appoint a Qualification Board on you."

Jim's face fell. "You mean I'll have to make a submerged approach with this old tub? Why, she's so out of date it would be just a waste of time!"

"That's where you're wrong, Jim," I said, a bit sententiously, startled by his sudden vehemence. "For all you know you might have to command this ship or one like it in action. After all, there is a squadron of S-boats out in the Philippines right now."

"They ought to have their heads examined," said Jim, reaching into

the desk for another cigarette. "That's just plain crazy, keeping those S-boats out there."

Jim and I had argued this point before. "Easy, old boy," I said, "you may be right, but there is nothing you can do about it. The Examining Board will expect to see you make a submerged approach in this boat, using the equipment she's got—so you may as well expect it."

Jim lighted up and took a petulant puff. "I haven't had a chance to do any approach work since reporting to Philadelphia."

As skipper, it was, of course, my responsibility that my officers have adequate opportunity for their own training. I had to admit the demands of the sub school had taken priority.

"Look, Jim," I said, "after we get the *S-16* back together, we'll take time out of our post-refit trials to give you a couple of practice runs. That's all you need to get your hand back."

Jim's brow cleared. He leaped to his feet, crushing out the hardly tasted cigarette as he rose. "I want to run up the dock and phone Laura. Okay?"

"Sure!" I rose too. "Give her my best."

"You bet I will!" He turned at the state-room entrance. "This is a terrific break, you know! This is just what we've been waiting for. You'll be our best man, won't you?"

He turned and dashed away, leaving me thunderstruck. I had, of course—as we all had—realized that Jim and Laura were as good as engaged. But I didn't expect their marriage to hinge upon his qualification for command of submarines.

UPON RECEIPT of my recommendation, Captain Blunt ordered three other skippers in our squadron to form an Examining Board to meet on Jim at once. With Christmas almost upon us, this was not a popular order as the members of the Board had to give up their holiday plans.

The conversation with Blunt had taken place on Tuesday; Thursday was Christmas Day. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday the Examining Board worked Jim over on his knowledge of submarine theory, tactics, strategy, logistics, and even history. Monday found *S-16* getting under way again, her two weeks' refit summarily cut in half.

After thinking further about the prospect of leaving my ship to Jim, I was still not too happy. True, Jim could handle the ship well, and he

presumably knew the submerged-attack doctrine. But his judgment under pressure or in emergency situations was still an unknown quantity. How could I, seeking my own advantage, blithely leave *S-16* and her crew of forty men to him? And yet, having started the train of events, I was powerless to stop it.

Qualification for command of a submarine is probably the toughest formal test of a submarine officer's career, and it is almost equally tough on the members of the Examining Board. On the one hand, they hold the career of a brother officer in their hands; on the other, and much more important, they must consider the lives and well-being of his future ship's company as well. And it is serious also for the skipper recommending him, whose own judgment in so doing is under inspection. For a submarine is a demanding command in peace or war, probably more so than any other ship. The submarine skipper personally fights his ship. During war his is the responsibility for success or failure. In peacetime there are still the hazards of the malevolent sea.

On Monday we were—somehow—ready. Prior to the arrival of the Qualification Board, Jim, at their dictum, had made all preparations for getting under way; this was something he normally did every third day anyway, when he had the duty. The engines were warmed up and primed, the batteries fully charged, the crew at stations. I waited on the forecabin, swathed in muffler, foul-weather jacket and sea boots, turning my back to the freezing wind sweeping the river. Jim, of course, was on the bridge.

Three figures suddenly appeared at the head of the dock, and marched towards us. I recognized them immediately. Lieutenant Commander Roy Savage, a stocky, taciturn man, had been designated senior member of the Qualification Board. Bluff Carl Miller, behind him, was also a Lieutenant Commander; he had gone through submarine school with me. Stocker Kane, the junior member of the Board, was my closest friend of the three. He was another hard-to-know person, though one soon learned to like and respect his careful thinking.

Jim hurriedly climbed down on deck and stood with me to welcome the three other skippers aboard. Gravely we acknowledged their salutes. "Good morning, sir," I said to Savage. "Morning, Carl. Morning, Stocker."

Roy Savage didn't believe in wasting time. "Take her out as soon as

you're ready," he said to Jim. "Rich"—turning to me—"Bledsoe is skipper of this ship today. You and I are just passengers. You're only to take her over to avoid danger of casualty, and you know the consequences, of course, if you do."

This was customary for the under-way qualification, and Roy Savage knew I knew it. His care to spell it out for me, therefore, somehow tinkled a warning note in my mind. Savage, I had heard, had been indignant at Blunt's sudden directive to head the Board on Jim at this time. Perhaps this was an inkling of the attitude we might expect from him throughout the day.

Stocker Kane handed me a typewritten sheet of official stationery. "This will save your Yeoman a little trouble. I've got a copy for the Quartermaster, too."

S-16's Yeoman Quin, stepped forward and took the piece of paper from me, attaching it to another sheet he carried in his hand. The papers constituted our "sailing list"—a list containing the names, addresses, next of kin and other pertinent information on all persons embarked, which is sent ashore whenever a submarine gets under way. Rubinoffski, our Quartermaster, who had been waiting near the conning tower, also received a list of our passengers to enter in the log. Noticing the unobtrusive efficiency of these two, I felt a glow of pride at the fact that they so obviously knew exactly what they were doing.

Jim had returned to the bridge and was waiting. I could well appreciate how he must have felt, remembering how I had sweated under the eyes of my Qualification Board on *Octopus's* bridge. But I had never really given thought until this moment to the feeling my skipper must have experienced. Though Jim was officially her skipper for the day, nothing relieved me of responsibility for *S-16*. And yet I had to stand idly on her deck, too far from the bridge to take corrective action should anything go wrong, while one of my officers, as a result of my recommendation, held my career as well as his own in his nervous hands.

There was reason for Jim to sweat. He knew that three little black notebooks were in the hip pockets of the three alien skippers, ready for pencilled comments on every move he made.

After we were under way, the Board made Jim turn the deck over to Keith and take all three members through the ship while he laboriously

rigged her for dive. Normally, on rigging a submarine for dive—which means lining up all the valves and machinery in readiness for diving as differentiated from the “rigged for surface” condition in which she cannot dive at all—the enlisted men in each compartment actually do the work in accordance with a very thorough check-off list, and then all officers not on watch, each taking a couple of compartments, carefully check each item. Rigging a submarine for dive, though obviously of major importance, is considered so basic that it is rarely demanded of a candidate for qualification for command.

By the time we were approaching the operating area, south of New London Light, Jim was back on the bridge and had resumed operational command. The *Falcon*, our target boat, having followed us down the river, now stood off on a divergent course.

Besides myself, there were only the members of the regular watch—two look-outs—on the bridge with Jim.

“Take it easy, old man,” I said. “I think they may haze you a little, but don’t let it throw you. Everything is okay so far.”

Jim commenced to shiver. The air on the exposed bridge was biting cold, whirring the antenna wires and sucking the air out of our lungs. *S-16* pitched jerkily, the grey waters of the Sound slapping heavily against the superstructure where a film of milky coloured ice was beginning to form. In the distance the hazy shape of the *Falcon* could be distinguished, still heading away from us. In a few moments she would turn and run towards us at an unknown speed, using an unknown course and zigzag plan.

Jim’s problem, after diving, would be to determine her speed and base course, get in front of her, and then outmanoeuvre her zigzag so as to shoot a practice torpedo beneath her keel.

It was something we had all done many times on the “attack teacher,” beginning in our earliest submarine school days. The attack teacher is a device which simulates the submarine periscope station. The trainee can peer through a periscope which goes up through the ceiling to the room above, where he sees a model ship, in the size and perspective of a real one, as though it were an actual target some miles away at sea. He then “manœuvres” his dry-land submarine, makes his approach on the target and “fires” torpedoes just as he would in actuality. If he makes a poor approach—is rammed, for instance, by the target ship or an escort—the

instructors in great glee drop a cloth over the top of the periscope, stamp heavily on the floor, make banging noises with anything handy, and in general let it be known that the submarine—not to mention the embarrassed approach officer—is having a bad time.

Having learned the technique, the student is permitted to try it with a real submarine on a real target, shooting a torpedo equipped with exercise head instead of war head, and set to pass under instead of to hit. The degree of technical expertness demanded is of course greater as the level of qualification increases, and of Jim, this day, the Board expected perfection.

In the distance *Falcon's* hull lengthened. She had begun to turn round, preparatory to starting her target run.

Jim leaned towards the open hatch, cupping his hands. "Rig out the bow planes!" he ordered between chattering teeth. Immediately the bow planes, hinged flat against the *S 16's* bow like elephant's ears, commenced to fan out, stopping when they were fully extended perpendicular to her hull and slanted slightly downward, their forward edges digging deeply into the shallow seas.

This was the final act in the preparation for diving. As I stepped towards the hatch, *Falcon's* hull commenced to shorten, indicating that she had nearly completed her turn. At that moment an intensely brilliant signal light appeared at the base of her foremast.

"There's the light, Jim," I said.

He had seen it too. The moment the searchlight was extinguished, after having been pointed in our direction for several seconds, the exercise would officially begin.

I was half way down the ladder into the control room when I heard Jim order, "Clear the bridge," and a moment later the diving alarm sounded. There was just time to step off the ladder on to the tiny conning tower space to get out of the way of the two look outs scuttling by. Immediately after them came Jim, holding the wire hatch lanyard in his hand. Bowing his back, he pulled the hatch home with a satisfying click as the latch engaged. Then, straightening up, he swiftly whirled the steel wheel in the centre of the circular hatch, dogging it tightly on its seat.

The next second he was below in the control-room, superintending the operation of diving.

CHAPTER 2

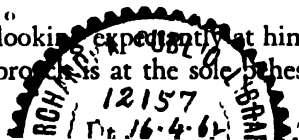
UP FROM the control room came the familiar noises. The venting of air, the slight additional pressure on my ears, and the quiet report: "Pressure in the boat, Green Board, sir!" The noise of the bow and stern planes operating, and the calm voice of the diving officer—Jim—giving instructions to their operators. The tilt of the deck, down by the bow ever so slightly, and their subsequent return to an even keel. The gurgle of water, hurly burly up the sides of the bridge and conning tower, the sudden darkness as the tiny glass "eye ports" went under, and the quietness when fully submerged. Swiftly the submarine, uneasily breasting the waves and graceless when surfaced, became a confident fish, moving with ease and certitude in her element.

In a moment came another signal: the clanging of the general alarm bell, which sent each member of the crew to his station. Then came a sharp "Klack!" as the electric brake on the periscope hoist motor released, and the whirring of the hoist cable as Jim, relieved of the diving duties by Tom Schultz, ordered the periscope to be raised for his first look at the target.

Quietly I descended the ladder and took station beside the helmsman in the forward part of our crowded, dimly lighted control-room. The ship's company were at their stations in the tiny compartment, ready to execute Jim's orders. The members of the qualification committee were here, too. It had been cold topside; here it was already stifling hot, men packed body against body. I could feel every move of the helmsman as I stood, facing the other way, jammed hip to hip against him.

When the base of the periscope came up from the tubular well in the deck of the control-room, Jim stooped and captured the handles, applied his right eye to the eye-piece and rose smoothly with it to a standing position. Once the 'scope was fully elevated, he spun it round twice rapidly, then ordered, "Down periscope!" stepping away slightly as the tube started down again. As he did so, the three black notebooks of the Board came out of their hiding places, received comments and disappeared. Jim gave me a bleak look.

The Qualification Board was now looking expectantly at him. Every move of a submarine making an approach is at the sole behest of the



Approach Officer; it was up to Jim to make the correct observations and give the right orders.

"Nothing in sight," Jim said. He waited nearly a full minute, then, "Up periscope!" The 'scope slithered out of its well, Jim fixing on the eye-piece, as before, the moment it appeared.

He twirled the periscope round, stopped suddenly, slightly on our starboard bow. "Bearing—Mark!" he said.

A disc-shaped celluloid "Is-Was," with revolving dials, used for matching target bearing with target course, was hanging round Keith's neck on a string. Only Jim could see the vertical cross hair in the periscope field of view, but the thin line etched on the periscope barrel indicated the direction in which he was looking. Keith was standing on the other side of the periscope from Jim, watching the spot where that thin line on its barrel matched against the bearing circle, or azimuth ring, on the overhead round it. "Zero one-six," he announced.

Jim's right hand had shifted to a small hand wheel on the side of the periscope. He turned it, first rapidly, then slowly and carefully. "Range—Mark!" he finally said.

"Six-seven-double-oh!" said Keith, who had shifted his attention to a dial at the base of his side of the instrument.

"Down periscope!" barked Jim. "Angle on the bow—hard to tell—looks like port thirty."

"Port thirty," muttered Keith, spinning two of the concentric celluloid discs of the Is-Was carefully with his thumb. As Assistant Approach Officer, or "Yes Man," Keith Leone was responsible for keeping the picture of the developing problem up to date on his Is-Was, for informing the Approach Officer of the progress of the problem, the condition of readiness of the ship and torpedo battery, and anything else he wanted to know. Hence the term "Yes-Man," as well as the title of the gadget he used to keep track of the relative positions of target and submarine.

"What's the distance to the track?"

This was an easy one. At the instant the target has a thirty-degree angle on the bow—thirty degrees away from heading right at you—the distance from the submarine to the target's projected track is equal to half the range. "Three-four-double-oh!" returned Keith, after a moment's pause—close enough. Keith was all right.

"Left full rudder!" Jim had taken a little time to make the obvious

move, and the three little black notebooks were half-way out of their hiding places before he gave the order. Crowded against the helmsman, I could feel his muscles harden as he threw his weight into the wheel. Jim ordered a sharp increase in speed. *S-16* leaped ahead, curving to the left in obedience to the helm—and three black notebooks leaped into the hands of their owners.

FOR SLOW SPEEDS, *S-16*'s two main storage batteries were normally connected in parallel, but for high speed they should have been switched to series—thus doubling the voltage and halving the current. In neglecting to shift to series, Jim was failing to get the maximum speed possible for the battery-discharge rate and, in addition, was risking damage to power cables and main motor armatures from the high current and the resulting heat. I tried vainly to catch his eye. He knew the score as well as I, but somehow, in the stress of the moment, he had completely forgotten.

The lights began to grow dimmer as *S-16* picked up speed. First Class Electrician's Mate John Larto shot me an agonized look, reached with both hands towards the electric control board at which he was stationed. No words were necessary. He knew that if I openly interfered in any way with the approach I automatically resumed command of the ship. I shifted my gaze to the three other skippers, found all still deep in their notebooks, went back to Larto and nodded ever so slightly. Larto was equal to the occasion.

"Series, aye, aye! Fifteen hundred a side!" He threw the response directly at Jim, as if answering a command. The lights, which had been dim, suddenly grew bright again, and there was a snapping symphony of electrical disconnects. Jim apparently took no notice. All three Board members looked up at me quickly. But I was scrutinizing the back of Tom's head and could offer no enlightenment.

"Target looks like a man-of-war," Jim said now, after a consultation with Keith. "Possibly a small cruiser or large destroyer. Set torpedo depth twelve feet. I'm going to try for a straight bow shot with a port-ninety track."

Well and good. Getting the target's description out of the way and telling your fire-control party what you want to do were both doctrine requirements. For several more minutes *S-16* rocketed along, her

superstructure vibrating, her antennae and life lines singing. The thrashing of her propellers drummed through the body of the ship. One minute passed—then two—then five. Jim, again deep in consultation with Keith, seemed perfectly satisfied.

My anxiety mounted. Jim had made only one periscope observation; as a result we had been racing at top submerged speed for several minutes, heading for a point near where the *Falcon* would be if it kept steady on its course. But if the target zigged, Jim's tactic of running blindly would almost certainly put him out in left field—exactly what the zigzag system was designed to achieve. The sub skipper always has to make sufficient periscope observations to detect the enemy's zigs and govern his course and speed accordingly. I tried to project my thought waves at Jim, to catch his eye, but he did not even look in my direction. Minute after minute dragged by. By the time the order came I was sweating—and I noticed that Savage, Miller and Kane were watching gravely.

"All stop!" The drumming stopped precipitantly, and you could feel the boat slow down.

"All ahead, three hundred a side!" Jim turned to Tom. "Make your depth four-six feet," he ordered.

Schultz had been keeping the depth gauges rigidly at four-five feet. Jim's order would bring the boat one foot deeper, with one foot less of the periscope sticking out of water when fully raised.

Keith brought up the *Is Was*, and showed Jim the assumed relative positions of submarine and target. Propped in a corner was another device, shaped roughly like a banjo, which Keith now picked up. The purpose of the Banjo was to give the firing bearing, or lead angle, for shooting torpedoes. The two discussed the problem for a moment, and then Jim turned to Larto. "What speed are we making now?"

"Three and a half knots, sir!"

Jim turned towards the periscope, and Keith ranged himself on its opposite side. He reached for the periscope-control knob, or "pickle," hanging on its wire nearby. The control-room grew very quiet as men stood stolidly at their stations waiting for the periscope observation.

Larto broke the silence. "Three knots, sir!"

Jim motioned with his thumbs up, and Keith squeezed the pickle. The shining steel barrel, wet and oily, started up from its well.

Jim, stooping as before, was ready for the eye-piece and handles. But before the periscope was all the way up, he suddenly motioned to Keith, who released the button on the pickle. The periscope stopped, not quite fully raised.

Jim was looking through it now, stooped over in an unnatural position, swinging it first one way and then the other.

"Can't see him," he muttered. "I'm under now—now I'm up again"—as a wave passed over the periscope.

This was good technique: minimum practicable exposure.

"Where should he bear, Keith?"

"He should be on the starboard beam," answered Keith, consulting the Is-Was. "Swing more to the right." So saying, he placed his hands over Jim's, and forcibly turned the handles until Jim's stance showed he was looking on our starboard beam.

Jim suddenly pushed the periscope back a trifle the other way. "There he is!" unnaturally loudly. "It's a zig! Bearing—Mark! Down 'scope!"

"Zero-eight-seven," answered Keith, as the 'scope went sliding down. "What's the angle on the bow, sir?"

"Starboard thirty." Jim motioned for the periscope to be raised again. "Stand by for a quick range," he said. As the periscope broke water he had his hand on the range dial. "Bearing—Mark! Range—Mark! Down 'scope!"

"Zero-nine-zero—three-eight-zero-zero," answered Keith.

"Right full rudder! All ahead, two thousand a side!"

The ship surged ahead again as Larto twisted his rheostats.

"What's distance to the track?"

"Nineteen hundred yards!"

Jim now seemed to be in complete command of the situation. "Target has zigged to his left. We'll swing round and get him with a straight bow shot, starboard ninety track, as he goes by."

This meant that although the target had changed from the course we had first observed, putting us on his other side, Jim, coming round towards him, would try to hit him squarely on the new side. As before, he hoped to do it with a torpedo set to run straight ahead. The whole submarine would have to be aimed at an angle ahead of the target in somewhat the same manner as a duck hunter leads his birds.

I could not help noticing how luck had played into Jim's hands.

Falcon's zig had come so late that he was still in an excellent attack position—a bit long-range, but nice.

Jim spoke again. "What course do I come to for a straight bow shot?"

In a moment Keith said, "One-three-four," holding out the *Is-Was* to Jim as he did so.

Jim consulted it briefly. "Steady on one-three-four," he directed the helmsman. Another thirty seconds passed before the boat came round to the intended firing course. "All ahead two hundred a side!" Another periscope look coming. At least Jim was not forgetting all he had learned about periscope technique, one of the items most closely observed in a submarine officer; but at no time had he looked all round with the periscope, turned it through a full 360 degrees. Doctrine as well as technique called for this as assurance against being caught unawares by another ship.

Jim waited for our speed to come off, then directed the periscope to be raised. "Bearing—Mark!"

"Three-one-seven!" The target was on *S-16's* port bow.

"Range—Mark!"

"Two-three-double-oh!"

"Down periscope!" The observation had taken eleven seconds. I pursed my lips approvingly, held out my stop watch to Stocker Kane, hoping no one had noticed the failure to look all round.

"Angle on the bow, starboard forty five!"

"Starboard forty-five," muttered Keith, spinning his *Is-Was*. "Distance to the track is sixteen hundred," he went on a moment later, anticipating Jim's next question.

"What's the firing bearing for this set up?"

Keith reached for the Banjo, squatted down on his haunches with it on his knees. "Target speed, sir?" he said.

"Use twelve knots," returned Jim.

Keith nodded, bent over the instrument and began carefully setting up the computing arms in accordance with the tactical situation. I could sense Jim's impatience. The target was moving towards the firing point; there was not much time to go. He turned to Tom at the diving station. "Four-six and a half feet!" he rasped.

Tom began to ease the boat six inches deeper in the water. This took time, for he was anxious not to drop below the ordered depth. Since the

tip of the periscope when fully extended reached only forty-seven feet two inches above the keel, a momentary loss of only a few inches could drag it under and blind the Approach Officer.

Jim waited tensely for a few seconds while the depth gauges did not budge. Then his temper, already badly strained, steamed over.

"Dammit!" he shouted at Tom, "I said four six and a half feet! When are you going to get there?"

Tom's neck settled into the open collar of his shirt, but he made no reply. In the next instant by the barest perceptible movement the gauges crept down to a point midway between the forty six and forty-seven-foot marks.

Jim's attention swung across the control room to Keith, patiently recording on paper the answers he had picked off the face of the Banjo. "What's holding you up, Leone?" he snarled.

Keith looked as if he had been struck, but his voice betrayed no emotion. "Firing bearings, four fish; three four three, three four four, three-four-four-a-half, three-four-five-a half. Set gyros one and a-half right, one-half right, one half left, and one and a half left. Firing bearing for the exercise torpedo, zero gyro angle, three four-five."

Jim was all business again. "Firing order normal order! Set depths twelve feet, speed high! Set gyros one-and-a-half right, one-half right, one-half left, one-and-a-half left!" As he gave the order he made a sign of negation to Quin, who functioned as telephone talker during battle stations.

"Torpedo-room! Firing order, normal order. . . ." Quin rehearsed the simulated battle order, but not into the telephone mounted on a breast plate attached round his neck. A second later: "Torpedo-room has the word, sir! Gyros set! Depth set!"

Jim now spoke again. "Set depth on the exercise torpedo thirty feet! Set torpedo gyro on zero!" There was urgency in his voice, and he pointed with emphasis at Quin.

This time Quin pressed the button on the mouthpiece and spoke into it. "Torpedo-room," he said, "set depth on the exercise fish thirty feet. Set gyro on zero."

The exercise torpedo was the real torpedo, the one on which Jim's qualification depended. In a moment the answer came back: "Torpedo ready, sir! Depth set thirty feet—gyro set on zero, sir!"

"Stand by!" snapped Jim and, seconds later, "Up periscope!"

The 'scope whirled upward, broke surface. I could see the shaft of light from the eye-piece striking Jim on the face.

"It's a zig away!" he shouted. "Bearing—Mark!"

"Three-three-eight!"

"Range—Mark!"

"One-five-double-oh!"

"Down periscope!" As the periscope went down, Jim spoke in bitter disappointment. "He's zigged away! Right at the firing point, oh, damn him, he's zigged away! The angle on the bow is ninety right now!" He raised his clenched fist above his head and swore.

"That's no zig, Jim!" Keith broke in rapidly. "The angle on the bow *should* be ninety! He's right on the firing point! . . . Look!" Keith excitedly told me the *Is Was*.

"It's no good, I tell you! We can't get him!"

"The hell we can't! Take another look!" I was surprised at Keith's vehemence. With his right hand he pressed the pickle to raise the periscope again—unbidden—and with his left he pushed Jim towards it for another observation.

"There he is, sir! Right there!" Keith had turned the periscope round another few degrees, was intently looking at the azimuth ring and the periscope hairline mark against it.

Almost unwillingly, Jim grasped the periscope handles, moved them slightly. "Bearing—Mark!" he said, still unconvinced.

"Three four three—*simulate fire ONE!*" called Keith.

"Fire ONE," Quin repeated. "ONE'S fired. Standing by TWO!"

"What's the angle on the bow, now Jim?" Keith had picked up the Banjo again, spoke insistently in a low but carrying tone.

"Starboard one hundred!" answered Jim.

"Okay!" said Keith, laying down the Banjo. "Stay on him!"

"I'm on him," growled Jim.

"Three-four-four! *Simulate fire TWO!*" Keith was back at the azimuth ring.

"Fire TWO! TWO'S away!" from Quin.

"*Stand by!*"

Quin picked up his telephone microphone for the first time for several minutes. "Stand by forward," he said.

Jim slowly rotated the periscope to keep up with the target. With the slow, precise movement of a watch, the thin line on the periscope barrel and the firing bearing on the azimuth ring closed together. You could hear men breathing in the compartment. Keith's right hand held the pickle.

"Bearing, three-four-five! FIRE!" Keith let this out with a bellow, as though he could shout the exercise torpedo out of the tube.

"FIRE!" shouted Quin into the telephone, a split second behind. There was a rumble from somewhere forward, and a hiss of air. *S-16* quivered as her hull took up the jolt.

All thought of continuing with the fictitious salvo was forgotten as Jim watched the progress of his torpedo through the periscope. He spoke suddenly:

"He's seen the torpedo. There goes the flag hoist."

The instructions for torpedo exercises called for the target to hoist a flag signal upon sighting a torpedo or its wake. This the *Falcon* had evidently done. A perfect shot would be signalled as M.O.T., or Middle of Target.

Jim stared, fascinated, through the periscope. "Looks good! Looks perfect! I'll hit him right in the M.O.T.! He's sunk, as sure as God made little green apples! There! It's crossed the track. It's a hit! Right under the M.O.T.!" Then, recollecting himself, Jim barked, "Secure from battle stations! Stand by to surface!"

This was Tom's cue to swing into action. He gave several low-voiced rapid orders, then turned to Jim and announced: "Ship is ready to surface, sir!"

Jim reached forward, grasped the diving-alarm handle and jerked it three times. Three raucous blasts resounded through the boat, and *S-16* began to tilt slightly up by the bow. And at last Jim was going round and round with the periscope.

"Eye-ports awash!" The call came down from the conning tower where Rubinoffski, the Quartermaster, had stationed himself at the first note of the surface alarm. A stream of light came into the tiny conning tower as the two eye-ports popped out of the water and the reflected rays danced in the open hatch above us and on the steel rungs of the ladder. Jim left the periscope, motioning to Keith to lower it, and leaped for the ladder. During surfacing, when the boat is still barely awash, all hands

must stand fast at their stations. Only the skipper and the Quartermaster go to the bridge, and the ship remains ready for instant diving.

"Crack the bridge hatch!" I could hear Jim's command to Rubinoffski and then the familiar whistling sound as the slightly increased air pressure in the submarine commenced to vent out. There was a sudden rush of air as Jim ordered the bridge hatch to be flung open. Next came the call "Look outs to the bridge." The two planesmen, no longer needed at the bow and stern planes, raced up the ladder. In a little more than a minute the surface condition had been established. When Jim sent for Keith to take over the bridge watch, I followed him up. A vague feeling of uneasiness had been growing in me during the previous hour.

The Quartermaster was just receiving the rail end of a semaphore message from *Falcon* when I arrived topside. "HIT TEN YARDS FORWARD NOT A TORP" I III

Jim slipped Keith on the back. "What do you think of that, hey? That old *Falcon* is sunk cold. I guess that's all, hey? I guess that showed the Board! Turn her round and head for the barn."

"Easy, old man," I said. "The rules don't let you go back to port until *Falcon* picks up your fish."

"Ah, hell, skipper," Jim grinned unabashed, "they're practically alongside it already. Let's at least start back."

It was true. The *Falcon* had turned as soon as the torpedo passed under her and had followed its wake. She still had the two flag hoists signifying "Torpedo in Sight" at her yardarm, and several ship lengths ahead of her we could see the splashes as the torpedo, its exercise head having blown dry, expended its last few ounces of fuel and air before coming to a stop.

"Better stick around just a bit longer, Jim," I said easily. "The Board might not agree with your shoving off so soon."

Jim shot me a startled look, then relaxed with a short laugh. "Guess you're right at that." Then he turned to Keith. "Close in to the *Falcon* until you can see them hoist the fish out of the water."

Falcon now slowed down and we gained on her rapidly. We could see the torpedo's yellow head bobbing a few yards on her port beam. Keith gave the order to decrease our speed.

Men were leaning over *Falcon's* rail with pieces of line in their hands, one man with a grapnel or hook on the end of a pole. Her long hoisting

boom on the afterdeck was swung over to the port side, and you could see that hooking the torpedo, which was to windward, was a mighty tricky business.

Jim directed Keith to bring us close aboard on the other side of the torpedo so as to make a lee for it, and within minutes after we had moved up we saw the torpedo in the air being hoisted on to *Falcon's* afterdeck.

"Good thing we waited, hey, Keith," said Jim.

Keith had no opportunity for reply, for at this moment a voice beneath us spoke up.

"Permission to come on the bridge?" It was Roy Savage.

"Permission granted," rejoined Jim, with a glance at me.

It had been crowded before on *S-16's* cramped little bridge, bundled as we all were against the cold, and the addition of a seventh person made it a very tight squeeze indeed. Savage turned to Jim. "Signal the *Falcon* to return to base."

Jim nodded to Rubinfofski. The Quartermaster leaped lightly on top of the periscope supports and unfurled his semaphore flags.

Savage was talking to Jim: "We want to go through a few emergency drills before returning to port. After you get the message off to *Falcon* get clear of her and dive."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Jim, and Roy Savage disappeared below again. Jim turned to me, his face contorted. "Hell's bells, what more can they want? They saw me hit with the torpedo, didn't they?"

I beckoned Jim to the after corner of the bridge. "Jim, old man," I said in a low tone, "that wasn't a very good approach."

"What do you mean?"

"Look, Jim, you were just plain lucky. You ran for over five minutes at high speed without making a single observation. If the *Falcon* had zigged during that time instead of at the end, you would never have got close enough to shoot."

"Nothing so lucky about that: when she flashed the light she was on one course, and when I finally got a look at her through the periscope she was on another one. So I knew she had already zigged, and wouldn't zig again for a while!"

"Well, okay," I said, "though that's not a very realistic way of doing it. Another thing: at the very end of the approach, at the firing point, you obviously lost the picture. Keith saved the approach for you——"

Jim's face became a mottled red. "The hell he did!" he almost shouted. "Who put the ship in firing position? Who aimed the torpedo? He was my assistant—it's his job to back me up!"

I still spoke in a placating tone. "I know, Jim, but remember when you said *Falcon* had rigged away? Keith knew he hadn't rigged. You wouldn't have fired at all if Keith hadn't made you."

Jim's jaw muscles bulged. "Don't you want me to be qualified? Are you for me or against me?"

"I want you to be qualified just as much as you do, Jim," I said steadily, "but what I am trying to say is that the Qualification Board has probably picked up these same points."

Jim muttered, "Damn this whole thing, anyway."

We would have talked further but a voice came from the conning tower. "Commander Savage wants Mr. Bledsoe in the control room!" Jim swung away abruptly and went below.

The *Falcon*, with our torpedo secured on deck, had already started back to port. Keith in the meantime was heading the ship back towards our previous diving point. He looked at me inquiringly.

"Keith," I said, "you know what you're supposed to do. As soon as Jim passes up the word, go ahead and dive."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Keith. "We're still rigged for dive, but the hatch has not been checked yet."

"Hasn't it?" I asked, surprised.

"No, sir. We were crowded up here, and Jim said not to bother because we weren't going to dive again."

Our ship's orders required that the bridge hatch be inspected while rigging the ship for dive, and again after every surfacing. This involved closing it, and if we were under way the skipper's assent was therefore required. "I'll ask Jim for permission to check it as soon as you get below," said Keith.

I dropped down the hatch into the small conning tower—in an S-boat, not a "conning tower" at all, in the strict sense. It contained a built-in desk for navigational work, and some signalling equipment. In the floor was a hatch identical to the bridge hatch, thus permitting complete isolation of the compartment should it become necessary. As I reached for the hand rail preparatory to continuing down to the control-room Jim appeared, framed in the open hatchway. "Bridge!" he shouted.

"Bridge, aye, aye!" answered Keith from above.

"Take her down!" Jim shouted. "Course two-seven-oh!"

"Permission to check the hatch first, sir!" Keith called down.

The light from the hatchway was in Jim's face and I knew he could not see me. Keith already had hold of the hatch. "It'll just take a minute, Jim," he yelled. "Okay?"

The past four days had been hell for Jim, and I could sympathize with his feelings at this point. Even so, his next action was unwarranted. He shook his head in an impatient negative and shouted imperatively, "*Take her down*, I said!"

Keith had no further choice. "Clear the bridge!" he called. A moment later came the two blasts of the diving alarm.

I stood near the eye-ports. Watching through them as our narrow slotted deck went under and the sea rose up to meet us had always been irresistibly fascinating to me, and I was never tired of an excuse to do so.

With the diving alarm still reverberating, one look-out and then the other appeared, scurrying down the ladder from the bridge. Both continued straight on through the lower hatch to the control-room below. Next came Rubinoffski, and then Keith.

The first intimation of something wrong was the noise made by the bridge hatch as Keith pulled it to. Instead of the satisfying thud of the latch snapping home, there was a peculiar clank.

Keith's face went dead-white. I leaped to his side as he struggled with the hatch-dogging mechanism. A glance disclosed the trouble. Somehow the dogs had not been fully retracted when the hatch had been opened the last time, and now, by the narrowest fraction of an inch, one of them was caught between the hatch and its seat!

Nor was this all. The latch, having enough slack in it to latch easily, had entered its slot and engaged. Try as we would, Keith and I could not push it free, nor could we budge the dogging mechanism. The hatch was locked, with daylight showing all round the edge by a matter of an inch or so. The only way of clearing it was with a maul and a heavy screwdriver or chisel. I could sense, rather than feel, *S-16* settling beneath us. There was no maul to be had in the conning tower, nor any time to work on the hatch if there were. Our only hope lay in stopping the boat from diving.

"Stop the dive!" I yelled down the hatch at my feet. "Hatch

jammed!" Our "hull openings" indicator, or "Christmas Tree," might still be showing red for the bridge hatch, but there was a strong possibility that, since the hatch was nearly shut, it might have gone green.

In answer there came a whistling noise from below, and air commenced to escape through the partly open hatch. With a groan I realized the control-room could not hear my order and was carrying out standard diving procedure—admitting high-pressure air into the boat as a test for tightness. If the barometer went up and then held steady after the air was shut off, it indicated that the hull was airtight, hence watertight. Not until the control-room shut the air valve in order to check the barometer would the ship's inability to hold air become evident. In the meantime I could feel *S-16* tilting her nose down. It was still only about twenty seconds since the diving alarm had been sounded, but we had only about the same number of seconds left.

"Leonic," I snapped. "Get below and surface the boat."

Keith gave me a scared look and bolted below.

Undecided as to my next move, I stood there, feeling far from heroic, half standing on the ladder and hanging on to the hatch wheel with both hands. The only way to clear the jam was to push back the latch, open the hatch, reverse the hand wheel so as to retract the dogs, and haul it shut again. Bracing myself and wrapping my left arm round the rail, I pushed on the latch with all my might with my right hand. Nothing happened. I tried hammering it with my clenched fist. Still no luck.

Suddenly the noise of the pressure test stopped, and I heard a different note, as high-pressure air whistled into the main ballast tanks. Keith had got through and surfacing procedures had been started.

But it took time to stop the downward momentum of a thousand tons of steel. Suddenly I heard a gurgling sound. The eye-ports were splashed with foam; then suddenly there was green water and the daylight in the conning tower grew dimmer. Air continued to hiss out above me, as the slightly increased pressure in *S-16's* hull equalized to atmosphere. I could hear water climbing quickly. Obviously the boat would not stop before the open hatch went under.

At this point I don't remember any further conscious thought. Once the hatch went under, water would rush down into the control-room, sweeping men from their stations, shorting the electrical equipment, possibly knocking out the bow and stern planes, the main motor control,

and the high pressure air manifold on which our safety now depended. If the control room were flooded, nothing could keep the ship from sinking to the bottom of Long Island Sound. Perhaps some of the crew would be able to shut watertight doors leading forward or aft, but men trapped in the control room would certainly be drowned. Water, which had been gurgling up the sides of the conning tower, now reached the hatch—there, meeting the gush of air still streaming out, it blew idiotically backward, and only a few drops fell inside.

From my position on the ladder I could see into the control room through the still open lower hatch. I leaned over it and roared, "Shut the hatch!" Just below stood Tom Schultz, and I caught a glimpse of his twisted face as, without a word, he reached up, grabbed the hand wheel and pulled it down. He had the hatch almost closed when it swung partly open again. I sprang down and landed on top of it, holding it shut with my weight while Tom spun the hand wheel between my feet from below, sealing it tight.

Instantly a deluge of cold sea water hit me in the back, knocking me to my hands and knees. I struggled to my feet in a veritable Niagara of angry ocean pouring into the conning tower. I still remember a moment of wonder at the tremendous amount of water that came in though the hatch was ninety per cent closed. It rose rapidly in the tiny compartment. Frantically I searched for some high protected corner where I might be able to find a few gulps of precious air when the compartment became entirely flooded.

S-16 now commenced to right herself, her bow slowly coming up. With the flooding confined to the conning tower, there was no doubt that she would get back to the surface all right. The question was whether I could manage to avoid drowning until someone was able to come out through another hatch and rescue me. With that weight of water in the conning tower there would be no hope of pushing up the lower hatch and draining it through there.

Frantically, I climbed up on the tiny chart desk, bumping my head against the overhead. The water had reached my waist and was rising rapidly when it stopped coming in as though a hydrant had been shut off. I can remember the instantaneous relief. The ship was safe, and so, in a few moments, would I be.

It was several minutes in fact before anything else happened. I found



out later that Keith and Kohler had come up through the forward torpedo room, rushed over the slippery deck and climbed up on the bridge. With a large wrench which Keith had snatched up, they began battering at the latching mechanism from above. I shouted to them to stop for fear of breaking it, and had them slide the wrench through the opening to me. Sloshing backward, I measured the distance, swung gently and fair, and tapped the latch free on the first blow. The hatch instantly swung open under the combined heave of the two anxious men above.

After dogging the hatch properly from topside, the three of us made our way forward and below via the torpedo-room hatch. Jim was waiting at the foot of the ladder. "You fool," he hissed at Keith. "Do you realize what you almost did?" His face was livid and his lips quivered with fury. I could see Keith wilt.

"That will be all for you, Leone," Jim raged on. "This will be your last day in submarines. You ought to be court-martialled!"

Several members of the crew in the room stared their shocked surprise. I was amazed at Jim's outburst. "Cut it out," I told him curtly. "It wasn't Keith's fault." I motioned Keith into the forward battery compartment and followed him. Jim was behind me.

A difficult decision confronted me, and I had to make it immediately. The Board might—just possibly—still qualify Jim, particularly if I made excuses for him and pressed his case. But the last four days had been an eye opener. I knew, now, that I could never turn the *S-16* over to him until he had amassed considerably more experience and steadiness under stress. Everything he had done, these last few days, every word he had said clearly demonstrated his unreadiness for command responsibility. And yet, there was no denying that he was a fine submariner, all in all an asset to the Navy, and that he would not be in this situation had I not, for my own advantage, put him in it.

As our sorry little procession wound its way towards the ward-room and Jim's and my state-room, I knew there was only one thing to do. When we reached the curtain in the doorway I turned and said, "Come in a minute, will you, Jim?" Keith went on. Jim stepped with me into our little room, automatically reached for a cigarette. He avoided my eyes as he offered me one. I ignored it. This was going to be tough.

"Jim," I said, "I'm more sorry than I can possibly tell you. I'm going to take over now. I'll explain to the Board."

Jim had just taken a deep drag. As my decision sank home he choked. "Why you—you—" he gobbled for a moment. He threw the cigarette on the floor, stamped on it furiously. When he finally found his voice he spoke in a manner which no self-respecting person could forgive or forget, no commander of a United States man-of-war could condone. And yet I couldn't do any more to him after what I had already done. I had to take it, had to swallow the sudden sick indignation.



CHAPTER 3

LAURA ELWOOD had entered my life at the tag end of a long, hard day of training the previous August, shortly after the *S-16* arrived in New London from the Philadelphia Navy Yard. I was standing at the bar in the Officers' Club when I heard Jim's voice: "Captain, we were hoping we'd run into you. This is Laura Elwood."

Jim's arm through hers drew her gently forward. I remember looking straight into grey-green eyes, wide-spaced—and everything in the room dropped away.

Jim was still talking, but it didn't register. Laura was tall, slender and blonde. The smooth line of her throat vanished into a gently rounded fullness. A soft green jersey dress left her arms and throat bare and gave her an elusive air of innocence.

"You're going to have a hard time living up to the build-up Jim's been giving you, Captain," she said.

"Call me Rich," I said.

"That's right, Laura." Jim grinned in high good spirits. "Don't pay any attention to me because I'll still have to call him Captain—it's that good old Navy tradition."

"That suits me fine, Rich," Laura said. The light from the candles above the bar wavered in the depths of her eyes. She turned to Jim. "Can't we take Rich in with us to dinner? He looks tired. I think he needs cheering up."

I thought Jim seemed just a trifle taken aback, but he grinned quickly at her. "Sure," he said. "Why don't you ask him?"

She had already turned back to me, slipped her arm impulsively through mine, hugged it to her. "You will, won't you, Rich?"

Laura, I soon learned, had come down from New Haven, where she had been working as a secretary since her father's death. Professor Elwood, a widower, had taught economics at Yale, and it was there that she had first met Jim. She wrinkled her nose impishly at him when they got on the subject—it was a straight nose, with barely the suggestion of an upturned tip.

Dinner passed in a haze of delight. I had almost forgotten the completeness the right girl can bring in a man's life. I found myself telling her all about my most terrifying experience on board the *Octopus*, while she listened with rapt attention, the tips of her fingers resting on my arm. Her eyes, now gay, now thoughtful, now sober, contained enough promise to drown in.

When the orchestra arrived, Jim and Laura were the first couple on the floor. I waited a respectable time and then cut in on them. Laura came simply and directly into my arms from Jim's, without self-consciousness, and in a little while the side of her forehead rested against my cheek. I couldn't tell whether we were dancing or drifting on a cloud, and I fiercely willed the music to play on and on and on—but after a while it stopped and Jim was standing there with his hand outstretched to claim her.

Later, I danced with Laura once more, then said good-bye. But even back on the *S-16* a feeling of well-being possessed me. For the first time for months I felt completely relaxed.

And then the reasoning part of my brain took charge. I had seen her only once, at a time when I was desperately tired. She had made me feel better, but I should not infer too much from that. Above all, Laura belonged to Jim.

Still, during the following months, I welcomed every opportunity chance threw my way to see Laura. She came to New London nearly

every week-end when Jim and she could be together and, as the months drifted by, it came to be accepted that they had arrived at some sort of understanding. It was on December 7, a cold, rainy Sunday in New London, that I, for one, knew it must be so.

I had gone to the club for lunch and, finding Laura and Jim there, accepted their invitation to join them. Afterwards we settled on one of the deep divans in the sitting-room. It was about two p.m.; there was a crackling fire in the fireplace, and someone at the bar had turned on a radio. We could hear music playing and occasionally the voice of an announcer. And then we sensed an electric change in the programme. A new voice was talking excitedly.

There was a sudden tenseness in Laura as she looked quickly from Jim to me, and her hand sought his. I stood up. "Guess I'd better go and find out what bank," I said. I walked out of the room feeling a little heroic, and a little foolish.

I'll never forget the look on Laura's face when I came back and gave them the details. "I'll have to go right back to the ship," I said. "Jim, there's not much we can do, but you know the regulations. You'd better take Laura back to her hotel and help her get the next train."

Jim nodded, but Laura interposed quickly, taking his arm in an unconsciously revealing gesture as she did so. "I can certainly catch a train by myself. The place for Jim is on the S-16 with you, Rich, and the quicker he gets there the better. Why, you might get orders to go to sea right away—and—never come back!"

For all her brave words, Laura's chin trembled and the last words were uttered in a sob. She hid her face on Jim's shoulder. Awkwardly he patted her, and put his arm round her and suddenly her shoulders shook with uncontrolled sobs as she clung to him.

"Stow it, Laury," Jim gently whispered. "It's a bad break for a lot of people—a lot of them must have been killed this morning. It just can't be helped what it does to us."

Controlling herself, Laura pushed herself away from Jim, sat upright. "I'm sorry, Jim. It's just—so horrible. Everything's so mixed up—nothing will ever be right again!"

They had completely forgotten my presence. "Excuse me a minute," I mumbled. "I'll be right back."

At the bar, old Homer, the steward, was talking into the microphone.

"There will be a bus leaving the front of the club for New London in ten minutes," he announced. "All visitors are requested to leave the base please, by order of the Base Commander."

Laura was completely herself again as Jim put her on the bus. It was a sober crowd, and sober good-byes were said. I shook hands quickly so as to get out of their way. When Jim joined me his mouth showed a trace of lipstick, and his face was grim.

Tom was waiting for us on deck near the gangway as we approached the *S-16*. He had buckled on a service forty-five, and the gangway watch was similarly armed. Two additional men were on watch, one on the bow and another on the stern, likewise wearing pistols.

I nodded approval of his action. "What instructions have you given the watch?" I asked.

"Remain on their feet and alert for sabotage or other unusual incidents in the river or on the beach," he answered. "Challenge anything suspicious immediately in a loud voice. If no answer, or not satisfactory, draw gun and fire one shot in the air. If still not satisfactory, shoot to hit. By that time the rest of us will be up here."

"Good man!" I said. "Where did you pick all this up?"

Tom looked pleased. "I was in the old *S 31* in China when the Japs sunk the *Panay*," he said. "The place was swarming with bumboats, and we expected any minute that a whole gang of Japs would come jumping out of one of them."

My watch said two-thirty when Captain Blunt showed up. His manner was incisive and to the point. What additional security measures had we taken? What percentage of our crew was aboard? How much fuel and provisions did we have on hand, and how many war-shots were there in the torpedo-rooms? He made notes in a battered notebook and departed as abruptly as he had come, en route to the next boat of his squadron.

I looked at my watch again. Two-forty. It had taken us just forty minutes to go to war.

BUT NEITHER the Japanese nor the Germans attacked us, and so far as Jim and Laura were concerned it was not good-bye after all. We continued doing exactly what we had been doing, but with pace virtually doubled. And the next week Laura resumed her visits to New London.

By Christmas time I should not have been surprised at learning that

Jim and Laura planned to be married contingent on Jim's qualification for command. But I couldn't prevent a twinge of jealousy, or envy, when Jim finally gave me the news. And then when I had to destroy it all, there came the strangest feeling of nakedness, as though for an instant he had looked right into my innermost soul and had seen there things I hadn't even admitted to myself, or suspected until that moment—things which he hated me for.

So the week following Jim's failure to qualify for command was an extremely uncomfortable one on the *S 16*. Jim fell into a cold sullenness which included everyone in the ship, and he spoke to no one except when absolutely required to. I don't think he addressed ten words to me the whole time. Keith and Tom also felt the strain, and the crew's unwonted quietness showed they felt it too. Jim had been popular with them.

On Friday afternoon at the close of working hours Jim dressed in civilian clothes and disappeared. The customary "Permission to go ashore, sir" was conspicuously absent, and we did not see him again until Monday morning when he arrived precisely fifteen minutes prior to our scheduled time for getting under way.

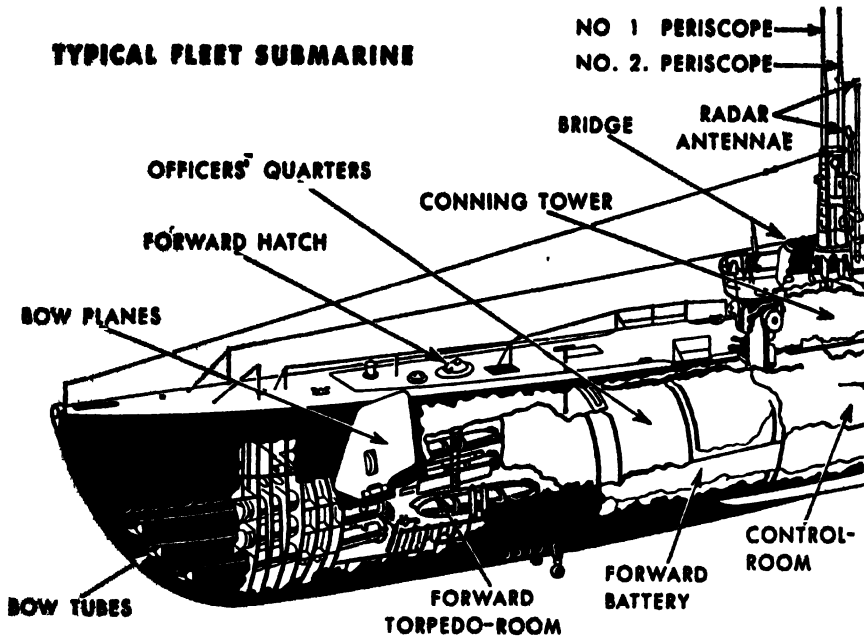
Life went on in this new groove for several weeks. Our operations were routine. Jim was efficient, precise, thorough and unapproachable. He went to New Haven every time he had the chance.

Then the whirlwind hit us. Captain Blunt in one of his gruffs, to the point interviews informed me that my promotion to Lieutenant Commander had come through, that *S 16* was to be turned over to the Polish Navy, and that the *Walrus*, just launched at the Electric Boat Company's shipyard, was to be given to me. Furthermore, the Admiral had decided that the simplest way to put a crew aboard *Walrus* was to transfer the whole *S 16* outfit to her.

My jaw hung open. But old Blunt wasn't quite done yet. "You don't have to take them all—just those who want to go. Of course, those who don't—"

His smile was sardonic. Blunt's reaction to my dictum regarding Jim had been "If he's not qualified to take command he has no right to be an Exec." I had argued and finally convinced Captain Blunt that there was nothing wrong with Jim that time wouldn't fix; and I had assured him that I would be willing to have him as my Exec anywhere. But

TYPICAL FLEET SUBMARINE



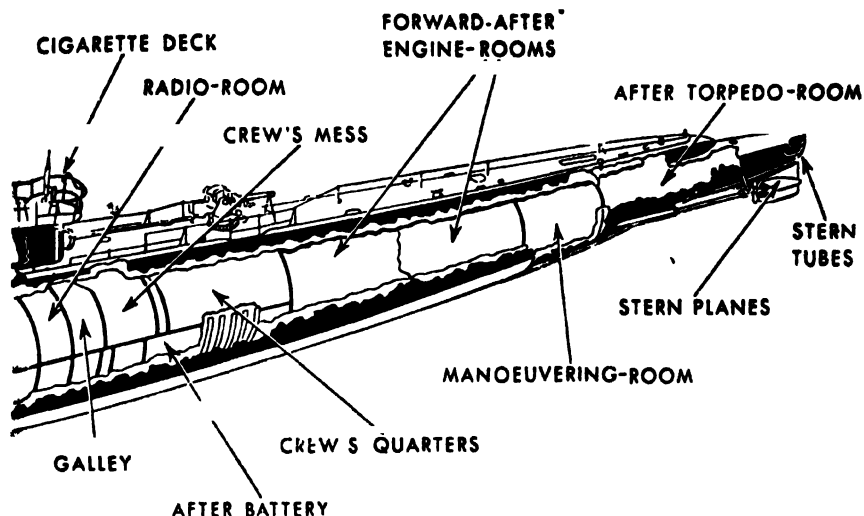
persuading Jim to come with me to the *Walrus* was another matter, as perhaps Blunt had foreseen.

One day shortly before the final ceremony transferring the *S-16* to the Poles, Jim came up to me with a sheet of ship's stationery in his hand. "Captain," he said—it was the first time he had thus addressed me since the qualification fiasco—"I have been thinking it over for a long time. I would like a transfer." The paper was an official request for a change of duty from *S-16* to "any other vessel of Squadron Two."

"What's this for, Jim?" I asked.

He looked sulky and fidgeted uncomfortably. "How do you think I'd feel going on the *Walrus* and knowing I can never get anywhere in submarines? I've got ambitions, too. I want to make something out of myself. After what you did to me can't you see I'm all through—shot? With another skipper maybe I can qualify."

I had expected that Jim might feel this way, and had my answer ready, or thought I did. Unbidden, my mind spun sixty miles to the westward and I found myself wondering what he had told Laura. I had not seen



her since Jim's test "Listen, Jim, you've got this all wrong. I've no prejudice against you. I want you in *Walrus* because I like you and you're a good Excc. I know that some day you will be skipper of your own boat."

There was a plaintive note in Jim's voice. "But I'll never make it with you. I don't want to go with you. I want to stay here where I can do some good. Where people respect me."

"What can you do here that you can't in a fleet sub?"

"I might be able to take over one of the school boats, if I can get with a skipper who'll recommend me."

"What about the war? Don't you propose to get in that?"

Jim looked away. His voice was strained. "I'm looking out for Number One from here on. Nobody else will—not you! To hell with the *Walrus* and to hell with the war, too!"

Heretofore I had used the friendly approach, had stood for his silence and sullen bad temper. Maybe this was the time to change, though it would give Jim cause to hate me all the more. I stood up, picked up his neatly typed request. I made my voice emotionless.

"Listen, Bledsoe, what you've just said is disloyal and disrespectful. The Bureau of Naval Personnel has ordered this whole ship's company to the *Walrus*. You have already received official orders to that effect. Furthermore, it's time you stopped behaving like a spoiled child. If you deserve command, you'll get it."

Navy regulations specifically forbade my doing so—but as I finished I ripped the paper in half twice and threw it back on the table. Jim had started to speak, but stopped uncertainly as I tore up his request. For a moment he stood irresolute, and then, muttering something, he turned and stalked away.

Jim knew the regulations as well as I did, but the bluff worked. There grew a new wariness about him and with the transfer of *S-16* to the Poles finally effected—an unmitigated headache—he concentrated on his job: organizing *Walrus*.

Walrus was already in the water, near to completion, when we reported to the Electric Boat Company yard where her keel had been laid. The yard workers were knocking themselves out—had been ever since Pearl Harbour—and she would make her first dive within two months. Twenty-four hours a day an army of workmen were in, on and about her. The acrid smell of welding, the din of power tools and the clatter of workmen never ceased.

Our office was in a temporary wooden building at the head of the dock where *Walrus* lay. Every day Jim, Keith and Tom met there to wrestle with the problems of preparing the ship's organization and orders and making duty assignments for the crew. There was a lot to do, and the burden fell primarily on Jim as Exec.

And then one day I realized that Jim's sulkiness had mysteriously disappeared. He was not the same as before, of course; but there was a distinct change for the better. Whether he had finally come to understand my position or was submerging his true feelings, I was too grateful for the improvement in our relations to question it.

And I realized another thing, too.

When I finally saw Laura, it was at a ship's party we had got up as a parting gesture for the *S-16*. I had wondered whether Jim would bring her, and when the door opened and he and Laura stood there I had the sudden feeling of ice on my backbone. She came in with Jim. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes dancing as she greeted all the others warmly.

She tossed me a curt, cool hello. Throughout the evening she answered my attempts at conversation in monosyllables. I couldn't avoid asking her to dance, and it was like holding a faultless dummy in my arms. Jim claimed her as soon as he decently could.

The party, as far as I was concerned, was a flop. Some day Laura might understand my actions but it was hopeless now to try to explain. The hurt was deep, and I had to let it go in silence.

Walrus was half as long again as *S-16*, and she was at least twice as much submarine. She had four huge diesel engines in two engine compartments. There were ten torpedo tubes—six in the bow and four in the stern. Her control-room was spacious compared with that of the *S-16* and, best of all, her conning tower, eight feet in diameter, was a real fire-control room from which the periscopes could be operated, the ship manoeuvred and torpedoes fired. In its after end, curved to fit against its shell, was the Torpedo Data Computer, a machine by which we would solve enemy course and speed and automatically send the proper torpedo gyro angles to the torpedoes.

Most of the crew of *S-16* had volunteered to come along to the *Walrus*. Kohler, Chief of the Boat and now in charge of two torpedo-rooms instead of one, was in his element; his pleasure was good to behold. Larto was notified of his appointment to Chief Electrician's Mate and assigned to the electrical-control station, or manoeuvring-room, of *Walrus*. Yeoman Quin happily took charge of what he called a "really commodious" little office about four feet by three feet by five and a half feet high—much better than the part-time corner he had been given before. Rubinoffski, our Quartermaster took over the conning tower, the bridge above, and a whole series of chart drawers located in the ward-room. Our cook, Russo, couldn't spend enough time in his new galley. He had never seen anything so beautiful, he said, watching with delight as two new electric stoves were lowered into his new domain.

Jim, Keith and Tom as a matter of course kept their original assignments as Exec, Gunnery and Torpedo and Engineer. We were assigned two more officers, Hugh Adams and Dave Freeman, fresh out of the submarine school. Adams, tall and gangling, with an unruly thatch of reddish hair, would understudy Tom Schultz as Assistant Engineer. Freeman, a small intense youth, became our Communications Officer.

Late in March, during this preparatory phase, Jim sought me out with a dispatch in his hand. "Skipper," he said, "the others thought I should bring this to you right away. It's bad news."

"What?" I asked.

"It's about the *Octopus*. She's gone."

"Gone?" I repeated stupidly. I stood up. "Let me see it." Jim handed me the dispatch and I read it over several times. When I looked up, Jim was gone.

Losses in war had to be expected. But who could have foretold, when I left *Octopus* to take command of *S-16*, that my orders to that "old, broken-down tub" would spell the difference between life for me and death for my old shipmates? Getting *Walrus* ready now took on a new meaning. The war had come home in a particularly personal way. I fretted under delays and redoubled our efforts at training and preparation.

In getting a new ship organized long hours become ordinary, late nights the rule. The men have to be given battle, cleaning and watch stations. The crew must be divided into three sections, equally spaced as to ranks and abilities, and given such training ashore as is possible. Certain men had to be sent away to school to acquire basic knowledge about our new equipment. We all, at Tom's insistence, attended diving drill on the diving trainer at the submarine school—with the equipment set up to simulate fleet boat conditions—and Jim arranged for special time in the Attack Teacher's crowded schedule so that our fire control party could work together as a team before we went to sea.

Jim still made his week-end pilgrimages to New Haven. With the ship under construction there were no watches to prevent his having every week-end to himself.

We got *Walrus* to sea for the first time the last week in April, or rather Electric Boat did. Before a newly constructed submarine is turned over to the Navy, the company's trial crew has to take it out in the Sound for proof dives. It felt odd to be a guest in my own ship, and stranger yet to see a submarine being expertly operated by a bunch of Yard workmen clad in civilian work clothes. The Trial Captain disdained the proffered assistance of two tugs standing by. He backed *Walrus* smartly out into the Thames River, turned her on her keel with one propeller going ahead, the other backing, and headed her swiftly downstream. The

unused tugs followed to act as safety observers when we submerged.

The objective that day was to test *Walrus* for the tightness of her welded seams. "We used to try a boat for a week before turning her over to the Navy," the Trial Captain told me, "but they are rolling so many off the lines these days, all exactly alike, that all we need to do now is test the hull for tightness, and the systems to see if they work. You've got a good ship here, boy."

Twice more the trial crew took *Walrus* out, until the inspectors and supervisors were satisfied. A few more days of cleaning her up, and then she was delivered to the submarine base. I read my orders to the assembled crew in the presence of a small group of visitors and we all stood at salute as the United States flag was hoisted on her stern. *Walrus* was ours, the newest unit of the fleet.

Our work had just started. Now it was drilling aboard ship. Each of the three crew sections was required to be able to dive, get a trim, and operate the ship independently. Each of the officers had to take his turn handling a dive, handling the main engines, working out on the levers in the maneuvering-room, firing torpedoes, getting under way and making landings. Every day, Sunday included, we took *Walrus* out and went through our paces. The only days we stayed in port were when we had to provision ship, take on fuel or make some small repair.

After a month of practice we were inspected by Captain Blunt, who declared us to be in a condition of operational readiness. This inspection was the last item prior to our departure for Pearl Harbour. Ahead of us lay the necessary chores of fuelling ship, cramming her with provisions, taking a full load of torpedoes and spares aboard—and saying good-bye to families and friends.

We had a week to get ready. Five days before our scheduled departure Jim came to me with a request for three days' leave.

I couldn't help showing a little surprise. "What's up, Jim?" I asked. "This is a pretty busy time."

"I know it, sir, but this is one of those things. . . ." His voice trailed off and an intuitive flash told me that it concerned Laura. "I've got everything all set, sir. Everybody has his instructions and the officers know their own jobs better than I do anyway. Things can get along pretty well without me for the next few days."

This wasn't quite true because an Executive Officer's work is never

done so long as his skipper has things on his mind. But since we were leaving to go to war and Jim had done an excellent job, perhaps we could make a special arrangement for him.

"Okay, old man," I agreed. "Arrange to be back a couple of days before our scheduled departure."

Jim's countenance brightened. "Thanks, Skipper." He left with almost his old lightheartedness.

My own duties were now complicated by the series of briefing and study sessions which all departing skippers had to undergo. Two days before we were to leave, I was given a "Secret" briefing by the Admiral commanding the Atlantic submarine force.

He greeted me in a conference room "Richardson, I suppose you've heard most of the details of the Jap attack at Pearl Harbour?"

"I've heard a lot of stories about it."

"Well, that's the reason we've called you up here. We want you to know the situation exactly." He picked up a portfolio of papers. "When you get through this material you will see why we've had to accelerate submarine construction so drastically—and why every boat we can fit out is going to the Pacific right away. Come to my office if you have any questions." With that the Admiral shook hands again and departed.

I spent three hours alone going through the reports and photographs with growing consternation. We all knew things were tough in the Pacific, but I had not known they were this bad. Fighting a naval war in both oceans at the same time automatically reduced our available forces to shoestring size, and the losses we had suffered right at the outset made the situation look downright desperate. I silently reassembled all the papers, returned them to the Admiral's aide and thoughtfully made my way back to the *Walrus*.

She was lying at the pier directly in front of the Submarine Base Commander's office, and she had it all to herself. On either side of her, nested two to a pier, were other fleet boats. Somehow there was a studied deadliness about these sleek, streamlined monsters. They were built for war and they looked it.

Walrus's bridge, set well forward of amidships, was slightly swept back and smoothly rounded, with glassed portholes in its forward covered section. In its centre rose the tower-like periscope-support structure. In its after part was the "cigarette deck," deriving its name from

the now outmoded requirement that men come topside if they wanted a smoke.

On the main deck abaft the bridge *Walrus* carried a three-inch anti-aircraft gun with waterproofed mechanism, designed for rapid fire. Gun action, which required an ammunition supply from below, constituted one of the few occasions when a main deck hatch would be opened while under way. Otherwise, the only hatch ever opened—the only one needing to be closed for a quick dive—was the bridge hatch.

A feeling of tension was running through the ship now. I could sense it as I stepped over the brow and returned the salute of the gangway watch, and I was struck by a sudden premonition: "This ship will not survive the war."

Jim got back the next morning while we were at breakfast in the ward-room. He brought the news, I could tell. After a little light banter he broke it to us. He and Laura were married.

I can't begin to explain the sensation the news evoked in me. Certainly I had no right to be interested in Laura. There was just that indefinable yearning that she—or the mention of her—always brought out. I forced a congratulatory smile.

"That's grand, Jim. We all hope you'll both be very happy—but what a shame you have so little time together!"

Jim smiled ruefully. "Thanks," he said, "but it can't be helped. We might have had more time if certain things had worked out better, but we'll make out."

The deep seated resentment was still there all right.

CHAPTER 4

WE WERE scheduled to leave New London two days later, on Memorial Day. We were to get under way at fourteen-thirty—two-thirty p.m.—so the morning was filled with last minute preparations. At one-thirty we would have open gangway for relatives and friends of our ship's company. Certain critical pieces of equipment had been covered over so that our visitors could go below in order to see the places where their sons and husbands would be fighting the enemy.

At noon we had lunch in the ward-room. Tom brought his wife, Cynthia, Dave Freeman his mother; and Jim, of course, was with Laura.

It was a bit crowded, and the conversation ran in uneasy fits. Laura, sitting next to Jim on my right, ate very little. I could not help noticing the plain gold band she fingered nervously. The three women brought home to me for the first time what war must mean to the millions of mothers, wives and fiancées left behind.

At two p.m., Hugh Adams, who had the duty, directed that all guests please leave the ship. On the dock many of our men were bidding their last good-byes. Some of the women were unashamedly sobbing, and there were many long embraces. A hard lump rose in my throat as I watched.

We stood at the head of the gangway for a few moments saying our formal good-byes. Mrs. Freeman and Cynthia Schultz in turn pressed my hand. Laura was last. The deep misery in her eyes spoke volumes. How she must hate me! She turned to Jim, hid her face against him. He clasped her tightly to him, kissed her longingly. The lump in my throat tightened. I swallowed several times, finally turned away, struggling to retain my composure.

I had never wanted anything belonging to anyone else until that moment.

"Hugh," I said to Adams, "have the crew fall in at quarters."

After muster on deck abaft the bridge, I delivered a short speech to the effect that once we had left New London behind us we would be on our own. The sea was populated with enemy submarines, and constant alertness would be our only assurance of safety. I finished my speech simply with the words, "Leave your quarters. Man your stations for getting under way," and walked forward.

Just forward of the bridge, waiting for me to finish, stood the Admiral and Captain Blunt. On the dock near the gangway were the skippers of the two boats next in line behind *Walrus*, and Stocker Kane with his pretty wife, Harriet—unwillingly known as "Hurry." Behind them a throng of relatives and well-wishers stood watching, waiting for us to get under way.

The Admiral gripped my hand. "Good luck, Richardson." Captain Blunt gave me a firm clasp. "Good hunting, Rich; I'll be seeing you out there soon, I hope."

The other two skippers reached across the gangway, shook hands. Stocker, his arm round Hurry's waist, said, "Congratulations, old-timer!

I'll be only a few weeks behind you Got my orders to the *Nerka* at Mare Island. I'm flying there tomorrow."

Hurry pressed his arm to her "Isn't that wonderful, Rich? Ever since you got the *Walrus* Stocker's been just itching for his chance" Deep in her eyes a shadow belied her cheery voice Two people this much in love shouldn't have to face war, I thought

But now our time was at hand A main engine roared into life, throwing a cloud of water and smoke out of the exhaust port Then an engine on the other side thundered its defiance I saluted gravely as the Admiral and Captain Blunt stepped over the gangway As I did so two more engines simultaneously bellowed their sixteen cylinder starting song

Hugh was now up on the bridge Single up he shouted "Take in the gangway!" Stocker and the two other skippers grasped the gangway themselves I edged it away from the ship I turned and mounted to the bridge

"The ship is ready to get under way, Captain," said Hugh

Very well," acknowledging his salute "Take her out on time" It was then within a minute of two thirty p m

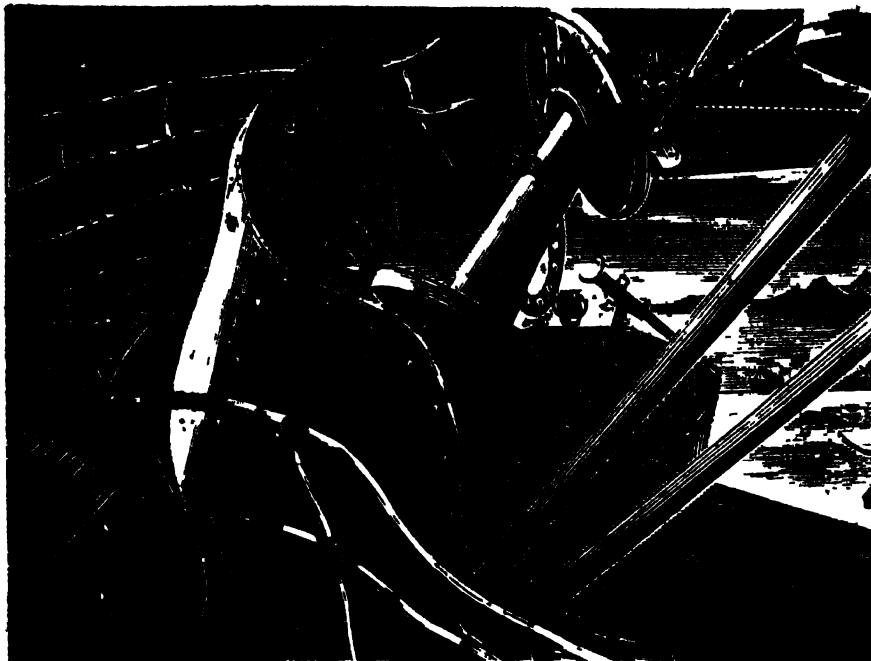
I spoke quietly to Jim "Have you had the ship searched for stow-aways?" It was hardly conceivable that anyone would stow away, but it had happened to a Mare Island boat not long before

"I had Kohler go through the ship We have no unauthorized people aboard, sir," Jim answered

"Take in Two and Three!" Hugh was shouting "Stand by to answer bells," he said to the conning tower A moment later, "Take in Four!" Number Four line came snaking in "Starboard back two thirds! Left full rudder!"

We slowly began to gather sternway Hugh ordered in Number One line and tugged on a toggle handle releasing a piercing foghorn blast for several seconds Then Rubinoſski, standing in the after part of the cigarette deck, blew a shrill note on a whistle and the mooring colours, which had been flying from the flagstaff on our stern, were taken down, as was the jack up forward Simultaneously, Rubinoſski grasped a short flagstaff with a flag rolled round it, jammed it into a socket at the end of the cigarette-deck bulwark, and unrolled our under way colours to the breeze.

Walrus backed nicely out into the Thames River, twisted to align



herself with the channel, and started down the familiar, often travelled river. We were on our way to war at last.

FOR THE SAKE of a fast passage south from New London, we had decided to run all the way on the surface, except for occasional short dives for drills and checking purposes. The big worry was the possibility of encountering a German submarine on patrol: a submarine has so little buoyancy reserve on the surface—none at all submerged, of course—that it can never hope to survive a torpedo hit. But the main thing was that we were new and untried. True, we had trained faithfully, but any German we might meet would have the inestimable advantage of weeks of constant alertness off a hostile shore.

During the first day and night, our look-outs thought they saw torpedo wakes or enemy submarines in every whitecap, but after several false alarms our trip settled down to an uneventful routine. It was a relief to stretch our legs ashore at Panama, but on the day of our arrival there, June 6, we heard of the Japanese attack on Midway. It made us anxious



to get on to the war. After a necessary wait of four days, we were under way for Pearl Harbour.

Our crossing of the Pacific was peaceful, our progress measured only by the change in our clocks as we kept up with the various time zones. Then one morning the verdant headlands of Oahu hove in sight and, soon after, a patrol boat came boiling up to meet us, flashed us the recognition signal and a curt "FOLLOW ME." We swung in astern and, still zigzagging, raced for Pearl Harbour.

We skirted close under Diamond Head, and ran down past Waikiki Beach. As we neared the Pearl Harbour Channel entrance, naval activity increased; and the closer we approached, the more aircraft there were flying about. There was something unreal about the scene. It all seemed so much as I had remembered it in peacetime and yet so vastly different. The urgency of our escort—the determined manner in which the planes overhead flew their search orbits—bespoke an entirely different atmosphere.

Walrus eased into the familiar channel and the feeling of unreality

grew. She forged steadily onward, past Hospital Point, round the next bend to the left, then to the right, and suddenly I gasped.

There indeed were the old familiar landmarks: the Navy Yard with its huge cranes; Ford Island in the centre of the harbour; ten-ten dock—so named for its length of one thousand and ten feet—extending out and blocking the view of the submarine piers beyond; the dry docks, tanks and buildings as I had known them. But now the stench of crude oil was everywhere. It struck my nostrils almost with physical pain. The shore line was black, filthy; and the water was filthy, too, with coagulated streaks of black grease clinging like relaxed death to bits of oily debris.

But the worst was alongside Ford Island, to port as we entered harbour, and it slowly unfolded itself as America's one-time battle line came into view.

The pictures I had seen showed a lot, but they could never show the hopeless, horrible desolation and destruction, the smashing, in an instant, of years of tradition and growth. *California's* bow was under water, only a few feet of her stern exposed. Astern of her lay the bulging side and bottom of a great ship with one huge propeller sticking out of the water. I knew that this was *Oklahoma*. Some kind of structure had been erected on her slanting belly and a few men seemed to be working round her. I could see one large hole in the heavy plates, and remembered what we had heard about men trapped inside.

A little distance away another shattered hulk showed its gaunt sides: *West Virginia*, once the pride of the fleet. A grimy, dirty water-line, now high out of water, showed how far she had sunk. She was afloat again, but horribly mangled. Aft *West Virginia*, a single tripod mast stood in the water. A flag floated from the gaff, symbol that the United States Navy would never surrender. *Arizona's* forward magazines blown up by the uncannily accurate Jap bombing, nothing left of her except her iron will, she could still serve as a reminder of the sacrifice war had demanded on its first day, and the huge reckoning we would some day exact in return.

By this time some of the crew had come topside to get our mooring lines ready. But no one touched a line. All stood staring in awe at the spectacle of destruction.

This was death, unvarnished; the destiny of three thousand U.S. sailors and officers.

Alongside ten-ten dock lay another rolled-over sunken ship: *Oglala*, an old ex-mine-layer which, according to unofficial reports, had simply died of fright. She had been touched by neither bomb nor torpedo, but her seams had opened up from the concussions nearby.

Up ahead a band was playing to greet us, and a delegation met us as we gently nosed in to the pier and put our lines over: Admiral Small, ComSubPac (Commanding Submarines, Pacific), followed by several other officers. We shook hands. Then came a huge sack of mail followed by two five-gallon tins of ice cream, well frosted on the outside, and finally a crate of choice red apples. Russo was topside in a moment at Dave Freeman's quick summons; he was too late to save the apples from members of the crew on deck, but the ice cream he carried, grinning, down below.

Admiral Small was speaking. "Richardson," he said, "we're short of boats, as you know. How soon can you go to sea?"

"Right away, sir. We only need to refuel and reprovise."

"Good. We'll want to take your torpedoes out and check them, and we have a few pieces of equipment to install in the ship."

The Admiral had not been satisfied with the recent performance of torpedoes, so every torpedo brought in by a submarine from the States was being overhauled before being issued for war patrol. Our principal item of new equipment was to be an S-I radar, designed for surface search and enabling the submarine to attack at night at high speed, without diving, while keeping the whole convoy-escort picture in view on the radarscope. Structural changes included replacing the bulwarks round the cigarette deck with life lines, thus cutting down the bulk of *Walrus's* silhouette.

We lay alongside the dock at Pearl Harbour for three days, during which the welding smoke and the clatter of air-operated chipping hammers never left us. I had thought the workmen at Electric Boat were fast, but these Navy enlisted men were faster. They worked twenty-four consecutive hours, almost continually. Russo, I found, was responsible for some of this: a never-ending stream of sandwiches, bowls of soup, cookies, and the like came out of his galley. I noticed also a few private little improvements being accomplished under his direct supervision, for the price, no doubt, of a couple of extra sandwiches or a surreptitious midnight steak.

There followed a week of intensive training from daybreak until after dark.

Three nights we remained at sea all night, for a convoy was arriving from San Francisco and an opportunity to practise a convoy attack was too good to miss.

Finally, this exhausting period was over and *Walrus*, fully checked and provisioned, was ready for patrol. On the morning we were to get under way, I presented myself in the Admiral's office. He led me into a room where a curtain had been pulled back to disclose a wall map of the Pacific.

"Area Seven is your area, Richardson," he said, indicating a spot off the eastern coast of Japan. "You have two good entrances here into the Inland Sea of Japan from the Pacific—Bungo Suido between the islands of Kyushu and Shikoku, and Kii Suido between Shikoku and Honshu. There will be a lot of coastwise traffic and perhaps some ocean traffic in and out of the Bungo. Here is your Operation Order." He handed me a freshly made up pamphlet.

"You'll go via Midway Island. We've put a little mail aboard you for the personnel there. When you get to Area Seven take it easy at first and explore the place. The last boat to come back from there went close in-shore after a few days and was badly depth charged. He thinks the Japs knew he was there the whole time. Anyway, he didn't have much luck and brought all his torpedoes back. Remember, Richardson, your mission is to inflict as much damage as you can on the enemy, not to get spotted or attacked yourself."

A few hours later I stood on *Walrus's* forecastle as preparations for getting under way were being completed. The Admiral had come down to see us off and the Base brass band was playing as he said his good-byes. "Oh, by the way," he said, "a couple of old friends of yours are due in here soon. Captain Blunt is coming in to be my Chief of Staff, and the *Nerka*, with your friend Kane as skipper, will be here in two weeks from Mare Island."

This indeed was good news. "I'll be looking forward to seeing them, Admiral," I said. I answered his salute to the colours as he walked across the gangway.

On reaching the other side, he turned. "Good hunting, Richardson," he called.

RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP



CHAPTER 5

AT MIDWAY, three days and twelve hundred miles later, we fuelled ship and delivered a dozen sacks of mail to the eager population. When we departed that same day, I had my first sight of the “gooney birds” which are the source of ninety per cent of the entertainment on Midway. Though they are graceful and lovely in the air, on land they are the most ungainly and foolish looking of birds. This was the albatross the Ancient Mariner shot, I reflected; but it wasn’t till we had left Midway over the horizon and one of them came gliding effortlessly in the ocean breezes, swooping and spiralling ahead and astern of us, all without the slightest movement of its wings, that I could understand the reverence in which the old time mariners held them.

Now began *Walrus’s* first true war patrol, with approximately sixty days at sea to look forward to. Jim had calculated that it would take us twelve days to reach Japan—and at noon of the twelfth day we saw through the periscope, dead ahead, the hazy outline of the coast of Kyushu.

As twilight closed in, the coast of Japan was plainly in sight, low-lying on the western horizon. We would not, of course, come up until it was dark enough to do so with minimum danger of being observed. But we had yet to see an enemy plane or ship and, the sooner we surfaced, the better horizon there would be for Jim to get his evening star sights. It was important to have our position accurate, and to get our battery charge started as soon as possible in case it should be needed later. And finally, during a long day submerged, a crew of seventy men and six officers—breathing oxygen and exhaling carbon dioxide—could greatly reduce the livability of the air inside the ship. True, we carried carbon-

dioxide absorbent, and oxygen in bottles for air revitalization, but these were needed for emergencies.

When we finally started up nothing could be seen through the periscope. On the surface, Rubinoffski and I, carrying binoculars, were on the bridge less than a second after the undogged hatch, safety catch released, had flung itself open with a huge rush of air. Rubinoffski ran aft to survey the after one hundred and eighty degrees sector, while I concentrated on the forward half of the ocean.

Slowly, I scanned the horizon; then the water, then the sky above, where a few stars glittered stonily from between clouds. I heard Rubinoffski report, "All clear aft."

"All clear forward," I muttered, half to myself.

Walrus rode sluggishly on the nearly smooth sea, her decks almost awash. As the turbo blow commenced to expel water and force large quantities of air into the ballast tanks she would rise to a more seaworthy altitude. To bring the ship to the fully surfaced condition would require approximately fifteen minutes. Five minutes would get her high enough for the slow patrolling we proposed.

"Permission to come on the bridge." This was Jim, wanting to get to work with the sextant.

"Come on up," I said. In a moment he was shooting the stars from the cigarette deck.

"Permission to start a battery charge." This was relayed up the conning-tower hatch by the messenger stationed there.

"Permission granted," I called back.

"Permission to dump garbage?"

"Granted," I said again. Up came Russo and two mess cooks, lugging three large gunny sacks containing the day's accumulation of trash and garbage, each one weighted with crushed tin cans, broken tools, even a stone or two from a supply Russo had brought aboard. The sacks floated aft as they slowly became water-logged.

I turned the deck over to Keith. "We'll proceed in towards the coast at slow speed until Jim gets his fix," I said. "Be alert for aircraft or Jap vessels."

I moved back to the after part of the cigarette deck and leaned thoughtfully against the wire cable which had replaced our bulwarks. A few miles ahead of us lay one of the main islands of Japan, Kyushu; and just

beyond it, through the Bungo Suido, was the Inland Sea, since earliest times one of the island empire's main traffic arteries. And now, of course, it constituted a huge sheltered harbour in which the whole Japanese battle fleet could hold manœuvres if desired.

We had achieved our destination. We had come over eight thousand miles to war.

BY MORNING we had approached close enough to Kyushu to take up a patrol station submerged about ten miles offshore. During the day we sighted smoke three times, close inshore. Jim eagerly argued for going in closer. I demurred. Several days in this position, followed by several days in each of three others, would give us some idea of traffic patterns in and out of the Bungo Suido.

"Jim, we've been here one day. Keep your shirt on," I was saying, when the musical notes of the general alarm interrupted us.

"Bong, bong, bong, bong, bong—" the doorbell chimes were still pealing out as, breathlessly, I confronted Dave Freeman in the conning tower.

"A ship, sir, coming this way—a big ship." Through the periscope I saw in the distance, exactly like our practice approaches in New London, the masts, stack and bridge structure of a large vessel. I could hear the warming-up notes of the T.D.C.—the Torpedo Data Computer. Keith was ready for business. Rubinoﬀski, garbed in his underwear and shoes, carrying his trousers, came clattering up the ladder. Off watch, he had been caught in his bunk by the call to quarters. Freeman relinquished the pickle to him—in *Walrus* Rubinoﬀski was the "periscope jockey"—and dashed below to his own station. The Quartermaster hastily thrust his bony legs into his dungarees.

"Observation," I snapped. "Bearing—Mark!"

"Three-three-nine and a half," said Rubinoﬀski, reading from the azimuth ring.

"Range—Mark!"

"One-four-oh-double-oh!" The 'scope dropped away.

"Angle on the bow, starboard ten." Keith was spinning his T.D.C. cranks with both hands.

"Any other ships in sight, Captain?" This was Jim.

"No," I said. "No escorts."

I turned to Keith. "What's the course to close the track with about a thirty-degree angle?"

Keith looked at his dials for a moment. "We're on it now, sir. Recommend no change. What kind of a ship is it, Captain?"

Jim had finished orienting the *Is Was*. He looked at me now with that eagerness for combat I had recently noticed.

"Can't tell yet," I said. "Buff superstructure, black stack, two masts. Some kind of a cargo vessel. No smoke."

"New ship then. Anyway, in good shape."

Up forward of the periscope was the underwater sound receiver—the sonar. Its pointer was going round steadily and slowly. The operator shook his head at my inquiring glance. I indicated the area on our starboard bow as the place for him to concentrate on, stepped back to the periscope, motioned with my thumbs.

"Zig to his right," I called. The angle on the bow had changed, was now port twenty degrees, and as I turned the periscope something else caught my eye—another mast. I looked closely on the other side, then back again. There were two small masts, one on either side, both apparently abeam or a little distance astern. This would not be the easy approach I had hoped for. "He has two escorts, Jim," I said.

"What kind?"

"Can't tell yet. They're a lot smaller and I can't see them. Quin was watching me. He picked up the telephone mouthpiece, spoke into it briefly. I could visualize everyone in the ship getting the word. "The skipper sees two destroyers up there!"

"Jim," I said, "have the ship rigged for depth charge."

Several observations later the situation was clearer. The ship was headed south out of Bungo Suido, perhaps bound for Guam or Saipan, making respectable speed and escorted by three old type destroyers. One escort rode on either beam of the target and a third one, which I had not seen at first, followed astern. I could feel *Walrus* tense up as the target drew near, zigzagging, presenting first one side and then the other. We were right on his base course and had only to manoeuvre for a shot as he went by.

To make as little noise as possible for the enemy's sound-detection equipment to pick up, we closed off the ventilation system, the air-conditioning machinery and all other equipment not essential to the business

at hand. The sweat ran saltily down my cheeks and into the corners of my mouth.

Through the periscope I could see the whole ship now, even her red water line heaving in and out of the sea. I had directed Tom to run at a depth that would leave me just enough exposed periscope to make observations between passing waves. The range had closed to about two miles when the target made another zig.

"Angle on the bow—starboard thirty five," I sang out, as the periscope descended. "Are we ready to shoot, Jim?"

Jim glanced upward at his check-off list. My eyes followed his. Every item on it but one had been neatly checked off in grease pencil. "We're ready to shoot, Captain, except that outer doors are still closed."

According to Pearl Harbor, our torpedoes were prone to flood if exposed in the air with the outer doors open for too long before firing. I turned to Quin. "Open the outer doors forward."

Then I nodded for the periscope. Iode it up, spun it round, lowered it. "The near escort will pass astern, well clear of us," I said. I failed to mention that the rear escort would by no means pass clear. Within minutes after firing he would be upon us.

"We'll give him three torpedoes on a ninety track, or as near to it as we can!"

"Ninety track. Three fish spread!" echoed Jim.

"The next observation will be a shooting observation! Stand by for ward!" My mind racing, I studied the slowly moving dials on the face of the TDC. The "correct solution light," a red F, was glowing brightly on the angle solver sector. The "torpedo run" was well within maximum range of the torpedo. It would only be a few seconds longer.

I could feel the taut expectancy of the ship. In the forward part of the conning tower O'Brien, the sonarman, had put the propeller beats on the loudspeaker. We could hear the "chug a chug, chug a-chug," as the enemy's screws came closer and closer. Less distinct was the lighter, high-pitched beat of the nearest escort, "thum, thum, thum, thum." It looked about time.

"This is a shooting observation," I said again. "Up periscope!" I put my eye to the eye guard. "No change. Bearing—Mark!"

"Three-three-six."

"Range"—I turned the range knob—"Mark!"

"One-eight-five-oh."

"Shoot," I said, signalling for the periscope to start down.

"Fire!" shouted Jim. Quin leaned on the firing key. *Walrus* shuddered. Over the sonar loudspeaker I could hear the torpedo whine out of the tube. A stop watch in his left hand, Jim made an adjustment to the angle solver. "Fire Two!" he shouted. Quin leaned on the firing key a second time. Another adjustment. Then, "Fire Three!"

I motioned for the periscope again, took a quick look. Our torpedoes were running nicely. A little over one minute to go. Up went the periscope again. I spun it round. One escort was passing astern—an old-type destroyer.

I swung back to the target just in time to see a white clad figure racing out to the side of his bridge. Then a stream of vapour shot from his stack, evidently his whistle. Too late: there was now no chance of avoiding our torpedoes. I swung the periscope all the way round. The destroyer which had just crossed our stern was heeling over radically, turning towards us. A quick look on our port beam. The rear most destroyer was coming directly at us, showing white water all along his water-line.

"Take her down!" I shouted. I could hear the rush of air as negative tank flood valve was opened to take in nine tons of water, well forward of amidships. *Walrus's* deck tilted forward gently. Suddenly there was a tremendous, stupefying roar.

Whrang-g-g. Our hull resounded like a tuning fork. It was like being inside a wash boiler and having a giant beat on the outside with a sledge hammer. My ears rang. Jim was shouting, "We've hit him! It's a hit!" He slapped me on the back. "You did it, Skipper."

"How about the other two fish?" I asked him.

Jim looked at his stop watch, shook his head regretfully. "No luck there. . . ."

A shout from O'Brien started a whole new train of thought. "He's starting a run on us!" I leaped to his side, grabbed the extra pair of earphones. The "pings" of the enemy destroyer's echo-ranging apparatus could be clearly heard, sounding just like our own destroyers'. The sonarman put his left hand on the gain control, ready to tune down the volume when the depth charges went off. I could see it shaking as he touched the knob.

WHAM . . . WHAM . . . WHAM. The giant alongside us cut loose with three violent blows from his sledge hammer. *Walrus* quivered and shook. Dust rose from the equipment and the deck. A piece of cork bounced from nowhere, landed on Adams's chart table.

I became aware of a new sound, a click which seemed to precede each depth charge. CLICK, WHAM . . . CLICK, WHAM . . . two more depth charges. Then there was a prolonged swishing of water as though someone were hosing our side with a fire hose. The propeller beat suddenly dropped in frequency. O'Brien glanced up briefly. "He's passed overhead."

"Maybe they'll go away now." This was Jim's voice. It did seem possible, for the destroyer's beat kept on without slackening towards the general direction of south east.

"Search all round," I directed O'Brien. He set his equipment in motion. The propeller beats of the destroyer which had depth-charged us were still to be heard, but the ship was definitely going away. I could see O'Brien listening intently in its direction.

Finally he looked up, uncovered one ear. "Captain," he said, "there are at least two ships over there. Two sets of high-speed propellers. Maybe more."

Jim said, "Good, they've gone off."

"I'm not so sure," I muttered, half to myself. *Walrus* had reached her maximum designed depth and now we slowed to minimum speed so that we would be difficult to hear, and, conversely, could hear better ourselves. Something, some impulse, caused me to ask O'Brien to turn the sound-head pointer back to the north-west sector. There it was. A slight increase in noise level. Nothing specific, no propeller beat, just an increased sound from that bearing.

Jim listened with me for some minutes. "What do you think it is?" he whispered finally.

"Don't know. Never heard anything like this before."

"Maybe we should come up and take a look."

For several more minutes we waited. Nothing more could be heard from the direction in which our destroyer had disappeared, but the noise, if such it could be called, had not changed. If anything, it was a bit weaker. *Walrus* stealthily slipped through the depths, every nerve taut, unable to see, not sure of what she heard. I ordered a course change,

to put the area of high sound level nearly astern—not exactly, so as not to mask it with the quiet swishing of our own propellers.

More time passed. It was over an hour since we had fired our torpedoes. Gradually our guard relaxed. To relieve the oppressive heat and humidity I permitted the ventilation system and air conditioning machinery to be started. It was quiet all round the sonar dial, except for our port quarter, where the faint noise level persisted.

"Maybe that's the sinking ship we're hearing!" Jim spoke eagerly. "If we hurry we might be able to see him sink! We don't have to surface—just get up to periscope depth!" I could sense the approval of everyone in the conning tower. In my own eagerness, I allowed myself to be convinced.

"Control! Six-four feet! Bring her up flat!" I leaned over the control room hatch, called the order down to Tom.

"Six-four feet, aye, aye!" Tom acknowledged, looking up from just below. "Request more speed!"

"Nothing doing, old man," I responded. "Bring her up easy. We've plenty of time." More speed would mean more noise, and some subconscious caution held me back, caused me to direct that the three remaining torpedoes loaded forward be made ready for instant firing.

Gently, *Walrus* inclined upward. As she approached periscope depth, I ordered the 'scope to be raised. "What's the bearing of that noise now?" I asked, my eyes at the eyepiece.

"It's shifted to the port bow, Captain!" Jim's voice.

"Put me on it!" I felt someone's hands laid on mine. The periscope was twisted to the left, and I followed docilely.

The periscope popped out in the hollow of a long swell. Before a wave engulfed the eyepiece, I caught a glimpse of masts above the crest of the wave, but nothing more. I waited another second or two—the periscope popped out again, there was a wave in front of it, beyond which I could again see the upper section of a mast. The wave receded, and the source of the masts came clearly—and suddenly—to view. It was a Japanese destroyer, broadside to us, and it was close, very close, nearly alongside in fact.

I snapped the periscope handle into the high-power position, felt myself catapulted almost into the destroyer's bridge. There were white-clad figures all about his topsides. Several arms pointed our way—we

could not have been more than two hundred yards from him—and I glimpsed a hustle on the bridge.

There was no time to do anything except try to get away. We were caught—caught fair!

"FIRE!" I shouted. My hair was standing on end. The flesh crawled round my belly. "Down periscope! *Take her down! Take her down fast! All ahead emergency! Left full rudder!*"

Oregon, our battle stations helmsman, heaved mightily on the steering wheel, banged both annunciators against the stops to signal emergency speed. A second later I felt three solid jerks in *Walrus's* tough frame as three torpedoes went on their sudden way.

We could practically feel the bow and stern planes bite into the water. The increased thrust of our screws heaved us forward and downward, but the movement of two thousand tons of steel is a slow, ponderous process.

"What is it, Captain? What's the matter?" Jim was nearly beside himself.

"Destroyer! Waiting for us! Not over two hundred yards away! He'll be on us in seconds!"

"Do you think they saw us?"

"You're damned right they saw us! The people on the bridge were pointing at us!" I swore without thinking about it or meaning to. "There were at least fifty men all over his topsides and they looked as though every one had a big pair of binoculars!"

I had almost been shouting. Now I recollected myself, turned to Quin: "Rig ship for depth charge! Rig ship for silent running!"

The sounds of slamming of watertight doors and bulkhead ventilation valves came clearly into the conning tower. No need to be careful about noise now! Our straining propellers were making more than enough anyway and, besides, our torpedoes would draw an arrow to our position at the apex of their wakes. I picked up the extra set of sonar headphones. "Where is he?"

O'Brien indicated the pointer in the sonar dial, nearly dead ahead, moving from port bow to starboard. Our rudder was still at full left, and *Walrus* was now swinging rapidly. We would let her turn a bit longer, then straighten out.

"What's our depth?" I looked at Jim.

"Passing eighty feet!" He tapped the glass face of the gauge as he spoke, to make sure it was not stuck. It had only been about twenty seconds since we had started to dive, but we had achieved a small down angle and should begin to go deep rapidly now.

I put on the earphones, and immediately heard the high speed screws of our enemy, becoming rapidly louder. The pings of his echo ranging apparatus were fast, short, continuous, implacable. I could hear the echoes rap off our hull almost as soon as transmitted. He was well on our starboard bow, coming in at high speed, perhaps hoping to ram.

"Rudder amidships!" Our compass card slowed its spin, steadied. This would increase our speed across the enemy track, tend to make him shoot his depth charges astern. Perhaps our torpedoes would prevent him from attacking immediately, possibly one might even, by great good fortune, hit him.

Forlorn hope! The whole inside of the submarine was resounding now with the enemy destroyer's propeller beats. We had reached ninety feet when the din attained an excruciating, violent crescendo of sound, and coherent thinking froze. He was dead overhead, roaring like an express train. There was a screaming of tortured gears, the whine of high speed turbines, the blast of water— all combined into a frenzied drive to send us for ever into the black depths of the sea. We could tell, by the abrupt change in the pitch of the noise, the exact instant he passed over.

"Here we are!" I remember thinking. "Here comes the grand daddy of all depth-chargings!" Ninety one feet, the depth gauges said. It was time—it was time—here it comes—

WHAM! A prolonged, crushing, catastrophic roar! The lights went out. I was thrown to the deck. There was someone lying beneath me. He felt wet, warm-wet, and he didn't move.

Scrambling to my feet, I realized our motion had changed—we had been blown to the surface. The ship still had a large angle down by the bow, but our rocking and pitching could only be the result of being on the surface in the wash of the vessel that had just passed overhead. No doubt our stern was well out, high in view—a beautiful target. Still black as ink in the conning tower. On rig for depth charge, the hatch between us and the control-room had been dogged down, and there was no communication except by telephone—useless at the moment, of course,

because the electric power had gone off. The whole interior of the submarine was a huge, reverberating cavern. If only we could see!

"Turn on the emergency lights!" I shouted. Standard practice called for the emergency lights to be turned on automatically—by anyone—if the main lighting went out.

No need to look at the depth gauge anyway. "All ahead emergency!" In the shattering uproar I bellowed the order as loud as I could. Quin might hear me, might be able to get through to the maneuvering room, or Oregon, at the other end of the conning tower, could ring for flank speed again three times. "Emergency ahead," under the circumstances existing, would cause Larto to open the main motor rheostats as far as they would go, put everything the battery could give into the propellers.

Now the noise was subsiding a little, but there was no telling, yet, whether *Nahla* would survive. Our only hope was that the depth charges had been set too deeply, so that, although blown to the surface, we were not seriously damaged. But there was no time to speculate about damage already received. Four-inch shells would be whizzing our way within seconds. We had to get back under immediately.

I reached for an emergency light switch near the ladder to the bridge. Dim lights came on at either end of the conning tower.

The conning tower looked as if a cyclone had struck it. Hugh Adams's chart table, shaken loose from its mountings, had fallen to the floor. Hugh himself lay on the deck. Keith was still at his station, frantically gripping the handles of the TDC. Jim was standing shakily beside him, white as a sheet but apparently unhurt. But these were not the important ones at the moment. Oregon was still at his steering wheel, and there seemed to be no damage in his locality. Quin was sitting on the deck holding his left arm, from which blood was dripping on to his trousers.

"Quin!" I roared. "All ahead emergency!"

The yeoman gave the order into the telephone mouthpiece. Beneath the firing panel was the hand telephone for routine communication throughout the ship. I reached for it. "Control!" The response was immediate.

"Control; aye, aye!" It was Tom Schultz himself, and I can remember my relief at discovering that at least part of the ship was still functioning.

"We're broached, Tom. Can you get her down?"

"Trying, sir!"

"We're going ahead emergency speed. Drive her as deep as you can," I told him. The order was superfluous. The slanting deck had already become difficult to stand on.

I listened, now, hearing the reports of the various compartments. Only the after torpedo room was in serious trouble. The voice from there said simply, "We have a fire back here."

"Can you handle it?" I snapped.

"Yes, sir, we're handling it." I relaxed. The main problem now was getting *Walrus* into the safe haven of deep waters.

The motion of the ship felt different—less jerky. I looked at the depth gauge. We were under again! The deck tilted down even more, I had to put my left arm round a periscope barrel to retain my balance. Down *Walrus* plunged, the depth gauge needle spinning rapidly. The conning-tower gauge went only to a hundred and fifty feet. When it reached a hundred and forty, I closed the valve for fear of breaking it. We could hear the rushing sound of water streaming past us.

"Two hundred feet!" said Quin. Our down angle remained rock steady. "Two hundred and fifty feet!" The angle was still steady. Tom was carrying out instructions. Finally he began to ease her off, until, without slackening speed, the ship became nearly level. Her whole frame now shook and trembled as she tore through the water. Something carried away topside and I heard a rattling, banging noise for a moment. Then it stopped.

I bent over the sound receiver. O'Brien looked up, shook his head. He could hear nothing at this speed. We would run on like this for a couple of minutes, I thought, then slow down and try to creep away. . . .

WHAM! Another depth charge.

WHAM! . . . WHAM! . . . WHAM! . . . Three more. Compared with our initiation these were nothing, but they did disturb the water again. Maybe their noise gave us the chance we needed.

"Right full rudder!" I called to Oregon. "All ahead one-third." This would quiet our thrashing propellers. With the speed we had already built up, the ship would coast a good distance. I picked up the telephone.

"Tom," I called, "I want to slow down now. We'll stay at this depth, and run as slowly and silently as we can."

A submarine's natural habitat is the silent depths of the sea. The deeper she can go, the safer she is, and with the comfortable shelter of hundreds of feet of water overhead the submariner can relax. Deep in the sea there is no sudden motion, no real sound save that put there by the insane humours of man. The slow, smooth stirring of the deep ocean currents, the occasional snort of a porpoise are all in low key, subdued, responsive to the primordial quiet of the deep. Of life there is, of course, plenty, and of death too. But even life and death, though violent, make little or no noise in the deep sea.

And so it was with *Walrus*. Down in the black depths, where live only those deep sea denizens who never see the light of day, she sought her succour. Deep below the surface, at the absolute limit of her designed depth, her steel ribs standing rigid against the fierce, implacable squeeze of millions of tons of water, *Walrus* struggled for her life. Her propellers were barely turning over, her sea valves and hull fittings were tightly shut against the deadly pressure, and no noise—no noise at all—could she make.

On the surface we could hear the sound of our adversary's screws moving from one side to another, as if trying to cover all the areas where we might be. But there were no more depth charges, and after a while all we could hear was the same sibilant hum which had presaged the destroyer's attack upon us.

But *Walrus* was not to be fooled again. We remained at silent running and maximum depth the rest of the day. The Jap destroyer, apparently convinced of our destruction, never resumed the attack. Gradually his betraying noise faded from our sonar equipment. We did not, however, trust ourselves to come back to periscope depth until long after sundown, and we did not surface until nearly midnight. Our first day in the war zone had been long, hard, and nearly disastrous.

It took us four days of steady labour to accomplish such minor repairs to gear and equipment as were necessary to continue on patrol. The ship as a whole was undamaged, but our radar was gone, and the fire in the after torpedo room had been in the stern plane motor, ruining it. Until we returned to port the stern plane would have to be operated by hand—not an easy task.

There were several persons slightly injured, among them Quin and

Hugh Adams, and we had one case of smoke inhalation from the after torpedo-room, but all the men were soon back on duty.

We searched for evidence of cracks in *Walrus's* hull or dents in her skin. There were none, despite plenty of mute evidence of the closeness of the explosions. I wrote in our patrol report:

Thorough inspection of the vessel indicates no further structural damage. The hull appears to have stood up very well. Our fervent thanks to the workers at Electric Boat who built this wonderful ship for us.

Our return to patrol was followed by a fruitless week during which Jim and I renewed our argument as to how far inshore we should go. Finally I gave in, and we proceeded to a place Jim had picked south of the Bungo, where coastwise traffic would have to make a jog to seaward to double a projecting point of land.

Our first day there we sighted nothing, except for a number of fishing boats. On the second a small freighter hove in sight, chuffing a large cloud of dirty smoke from her single tall stack.

"Let me see, Skipper," Jim begged. He made his observation and grinned as he turned to me—a hard, tight grin. "This fellow's our meat," he said.

The hapless vessel blundered into our trap and was saluted with a salvo of three torpedoes, one of which struck home. It was the first time I had ever seen a ship sink. To my surprise there was something of sadness and grace about the submissive way the clumsy old freighter bowed her head under the waves, put her dirty stern to the sky and gently slid under. Several lifeboats, some debris and a few bobbing heads remained behind, and as we moved clear the men in the lifeboats were busy hauling the survivors aboard. Only a few miles from shore, they would be safe by nightfall.

IN OUR last weeks in Area Seven we sighted one ship that was too far out of range and, several days later, we fired a three fish salvo that unaccountably missed another lone enemy ship at point-blank range. We saw nothing more, and at the end of August we put into the same dock at Pearl Harbour from which we had set forth almost exactly two months before.

Among the welcoming throng I spotted Admiral Small and Captain

Blunt. Almost as soon as we had shaken hands, the new Chief of Staff said, "Rich, I want you to come up to my office as soon as you can. We're very interested in the dispatch you sent after you were attacked." He left the ship taking my patrol report with him.

The Base Engineering and Repair Officer approached me next. "We're holding an empty dry dock for you and if you don't get this beat up bucket of yours in there in an hour, they're coming after me with a club."

There was only one way to move the ship and keep my appointment with Captain Blunt. I had been turning it over in my mind for some days, and this was as good a time as any to spring it. "Jim," I said, "I've got business with the Chief of Staff. Get the ship under way and put her in the dry dock. I'll meet you over there."

Jim's face showed astonishment for a moment, then lighted as he realized that I meant it.

I stood on the dock and watched *Walrus* get under way. It was the first time she had moved anywhere without me—even though someone else might have been giving the orders, I was there, on the bridge, ready to take over in an emergency. I had become used to the idea that she could not move without me, and I was conscious of an indescribable sort of premonition as she backed slowly away.

A few minutes later I was in the Chief of Staff's office. "Have you a pair of binoculars handy, sir?" I asked him. "I'd like to look out of your window for a minute to see how Jim's doing."

"Here!" Blunt opened a drawer in his desk. "What's up?" He grinned when I told him. "Every skipper comes to this moment, Rich," he said. "You know, the tension of a patrol is about the best test of a man's qualifications there is. If your Exec is qualified for command of a submarine, we'll take your word for it."

"I'd like to recommend Jim, then," I said without hesitation. "He's had the seasoning he needed, and he'll make an outstanding skipper."

"Write a letter to ComSubPac and it's done!" Blunt stood beside me, approvingly watching *Walrus* move out and round the tip of ten-ten dock. He nodded in approbation as she went out of our sight, then swung to me. "Rich," he said, "I want to talk to you about that destroyer which depth-charged you. Did you notice anything odd or strange about his tactics?"

"Only that he was waiting for us when we came up. He must have silenced his machinery, because we couldn't hear anything we could identify, even after we had practically reached periscope depth. And our sonarman swears he heard him start his engines."

Blunt made notes as I spoke.

"This is extremely significant. You should have mentioned it in your report. What else?"

Slightly on the defensive now, I racked my brains. "Well," I said finally, "there were at least fifty men on look-out watch with binoculars——"

"Wait a minute!" Old Blunt was writing rapidly. "Pete had stationed fifty men, all with binoculars?"

"Pete?"

"Bungo Pete. That's who you ran into, Rich. You're luckier than you have any idea of. Exactly a week before you entered Area Seven, the *Needlefish* was due out of there. We never heard from her."

The *Needlefish*! I had heard that Roy Savage had received orders to her.

"You don't know what happened to Roy?"

"We didn't know a thing until we received the transcript of a propaganda broadcast reporting that the glorious Japanese Navy had just sunk their second American submarine in two weeks south of the Bungo Suido. In both cases it said, debris came to the surface. In the second case the submarine attempted to surface and surrender, but couldn't make it." Blunt looked quizzically at me, and suddenly I realized what he was saying.

"You mean, we're the other boat!"

"Right, Rich. Not only that, they know it was the *Walrus*. Bungo always seems to know the names of his victims. He knew he had sunk the *Needlefish*, too."

"Who's in Area Seven right now?" I asked.

"Your old friend, Stocker Kane!"

"Is he all right?" I couldn't help the question.

"So far as we know he is. He got a ship the first week he was in there, and one other since, I think. We're going to pull him out in a couple of days and shift him to Australia."

Mentally I crossed my fingers.

CHAPTER 6

THE system evolved by ComSubPac gave us two weeks of freedom billeted in luxury in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. A "relief crew," complete with skipper, took over the ship. They would see to the completion of our outstanding work items, clean the ship thoroughly, stand all necessary watches, and turn *Wabau* back to us as good as new. In the meantime we had nothing to do except lie on the sand or sample the other pleasures of Waikiki Beach.

Jim and I, as skipper and Exec, drew a corner suite, two bedrooms with a sitting room between. Still tacked to the door was a card giving the prewar rates: seventy-five dollars a day. We were assessed, for linen, one dollar per day each. Our crew billeted in another wing, got theirs for twenty dollars a day.

A long, soaking hot bath felt wonderful and so did the stacks of personal mail which had arrived for everyone. I had several from my mother, telling of the doings in the little town where I had spent my boyhood, and of the difficulties of the ration system. There was a note from Stocker Kane, written just before departing on his first patrol, and Hurry, his wife, had also written.

Hurry Kane's letter was chatty and friendly. She made no mention of her loneliness for Stocker, though it was there between the lines. But the thing which most interested me was a paragraph about Laura Bledsoe. Having Jim go off to war so soon after they were married was pretty rough on her, she wrote. Laura stayed on in New London for several days, just didn't seem to know what to do with herself. You men will never be able to understand how it feels to be left behind.

I debated whether to mention this to Jim. There was no reason why I should not, I decided. I pushed open the door to his room, found him sitting half-naked on his bed, smoking a cigarette, with letters strewn round him, many in identical blue envelopes. "How's Laura?" I asked him.

"Fine. She's back at her job in New Haven." He stretched his arms. Most of his mail, including several of the blue envelopes, was still unopened. "What's that you've got there?" He wasn't interested, merely making conversation.

"I just heard from Stocker Kane," I side-stepped with a half-truth. "He might go to Australia, you know."

"The lucky stiff! One of my buddies from sub school is down there. He says there are twice as many women as men about, and they're all starved for affection." Jim looked up at the ceiling. "Let's try to get sent down there, too, Skipper. He can't handle all that stuff by himself."

"There are probably twice as many women trying to stay out of your friend's reach as there are co-operating with him," I growled. I stuffed the letter into a trouser pocket.

Despite the fact that he and I shared a suite, I practically never saw Jim during the rest of our "recuperation period." This was explained when, at one of the monthly dances on the terrace of the Bachelor Officers' Quarters, Jim showed up with a girl whom he introduced as Joan Lastrada.

She was deeply tanned, with masses of black hair, and very slender. Her thin face gave her full sensual lips an almost outsized appearance. When I cut in on Jim I decided it was not only her lips that were sensual.

I danced with her only once, but the determined stags gave Jim no peace. Half an hour before the party had been scheduled to break up, I realized that Jim and Joan were no longer there.

Walrus was not quite the same when we moved back aboard—more of the bridge superstructure had been removed and a twenty-millimetre gun had been installed at either end of it, for use in case we ran into one of the numerous armed wooden sampans which had been appearing in the home-island waters of Japan.

Our second patrol—off the Japanese-occupied island of Kiska in the Aleutians—amounted to a wasted month. The weather was lousy; no other adjective could describe it. It was freezing cold, and rough, overcast or foggy almost all the time—and not once during the whole period did we sight an enemy ship. But the patrol had one good thing to be said for it: I realized that Jim at last seemed his old relaxed self, and his support during the trying thirty days of inactivity off Kiska was heartening. I could sense it—almost touch the difference.

This time we were sent to Midway for our refit. All of us could testify, after three weeks among the sand dunes, that even gooney birds looked human.

As a matter of curiosity while we were there I looked into the situation off the Bungo Suido. Stocker Kane's *Nerka*, somehow, had not met Bungo Pete. But the next submarine in Area Seven had been horribly knocked about; and *Turbot*, the next one after that, had not been heard from for a long time and became "one day overdue from patrol" at the time of our own departure from Midway.

Our next operation order directed *Walrus* to Palau and the area between it and New Guinea. We made a fast passage, surfaced almost all the way, and had just crossed our area boundary at midnight when Jim called me to the bridge.

"There's a ship, Captain!" He pointed to the southern horizon. I had taken the precaution of keeping red goggles on whenever I went below at night, even when dozing for a few minutes. Hence I could see the small vessel almost at once—a short, stubby freighter, with a single tall stack, alone and unprotected.

"Call the crew to battle stations torpedo, Jim," I ordered. This seemed a good opportunity to try the night surface-attack technique. A few seconds later I called down to Jim over the newly installed bridge-conning-tower talk-back circuit, "I'm going to change course towards the target to get within radar range." I directed Oregon to put the rudder full left, calling for more speed as I did so. Snorting from her four aroused diesels, *Walrus* wheeled in the smooth water towards the enemy ship.

"Radar contact!" The speaker blared beside me. Then Jim's steady voice. "We have him on the radar, Captain. Range six thousand. Give us a bearing!"

I jammed my binoculars into their socket on top of the target-bearing transmitter, or T.B.T., a waterproof instrument by which target bearings could be communicated to the T.D.C. in the conning tower, and transmitted a bearing. Approximately a minute later I did the same thing again. In the conning tower they would get a range at the same instant, and the resulting plot would give us enemy course and speed, which was all we needed to know.

It was time now to sheer out, run on up ahead, attain our firing position, and get ready to let go our salvo; but this was where the roof caved in on us. I was looking at the target through my binoculars when suddenly his whole side erupted into light. As if by magic, four white

blossoms appeared in the water by us, two alongside to starboard, one just astern, one a few feet ahead and to port. Foaming water deluged our forecastle. We had been trapped as neatly as you please by a Q ship—a heavily armed warship disguised as a merchantman. It was the oldest trick in the book.

I fumbled frantically for the bridge diving alarm, pressed it hard, twice. "Clear the bridge!" I yelled. "Take her down!" Our four lookouts scuttled for the hatch. I swung back to the enemy, just in time to catch the second salvo. Four more white blossoms in the black ocean—but no closer than before, thank God! I noticed that the enemy had turned towards us and was racing as fast as his engines would drive him.

Our deck dipped, went under. I was the last man on the bridge. Time for one last look—a third salvo coming. The night was ripped again—once—twice—three times. *BI WHIRURANGGG!* I saw nothing but stars and bright flashes. We had been hit! I felt rather than saw the open hatch to the conning tower yawning at my feet, Rubinoſski gripping the hatch lanvard, the sea rushing up the side of the conning tower, gurgling and splashing. I lurched into the Quartermaster's arms, felt myself pushed aside as Rubinoſski jerked the hatch lid down and dogged it. Not a drop of water came in, but it could not have been far behind.

A pair of hands caught me on the ladder. "Skipper, are you all right? What happened?" asked a faraway familiar voice. —Jim's.

"We're hit!" I gasped. "Check—— That was as far as I got." Jim whirled, shouted down the control room hatch to Tom.

"Surface the boat! Blow everything!" He slammed the telephone set to his face. "Silence all along the line," he rasped. "We've been hit by gunfire! All compartments report!"

There was silence, too. All you could hear was the sound of the vents going closed again and the high pressure air whistling into the ballast tanks. In a moment I could feel the down angle begin to stabilize. In a second or two it would start decreasing and we would shoot to the surface.

But what would we do then? We stood no chance against the gun power of our adversary. Even if our pressure hull had been pierced, we'd be better off to stay submerged and try to control the flooding, unless the hole was too big. I pulled myself together and started to say

something, but Jim guessed my thoughts. He spoke rapidly, covering the mouthpiece of the phone as he did. "Don't worry, Skipper. Blowing is just precautionary. If the hole is too big to stay down, at least we'll have started up. If it's just a small one—" He broke off. "Make your reports in order, from forward aft, unless you're flooding!" he barked into the phone. He listened. Then: "Tom! Open your vents and resume the dive!" Jim bellowed the order down the hatch. "Take her on down—there's no water coming in!"

Tom was quick to countermand his instructions of less than half a minute before. But now, even though the angle of the dive had never come back to the horizontal, all our rapid downward momentum had been lost. We would have to drive her forcibly down again, from well past periscope depth, and in the meantime our Japanese friend would be coming after us with a bone in his teeth. He would have a beautiful marker of our whereabouts in the huge froth of air bubbles he would find.

One way to fix that. "Left full rudder!" We could turn towards him, perhaps get under him—and away before he looked for us.

I slung the extra sonar earphones round my neck, leaned over for a look at the depth gauge. Eighty feet, just beginning to increase slowly! O'Brien reached for me and pointed to his sound receiver. Red flashes. I put the phones over my ears, heard the pinging.

One hundred feet. We were going down faster but now I could hear a destroyer's high pitched "thum, thum, thum, thum, thum," not slow, chunking merchant propellers. Jim was silent, looking at me. I nodded gravely. "We're in for a depth charge session. Better get set."

We slowed down to creeping speed as we approached our depth, cursing the very name of this Jap who had so messed up our entry into his area. Of all things to fall for—a Q ship! I winced.

He was pretty good, too, with his depth charges! WHAM! . . . WHAM! . . . WHAM! . . . WHAM! Four good ones, shaking up our guts, making the inside of the ship ring. WHAM, WHAM, WHAM, WHAM, WHAMWHAM WHAMWHAMWHAM. Wiping the moist palms of my hands frequently on my trousers, I tried to outguess him as he crisscrossed overhead. He *was* good—might well qualify as Bungo Pete's little brother.

For hours *Walrus* crept along at deep submergence, while our enemy

straddled us with his patterns. WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! Successively louder, then diminishing. Try as we would we could not shake him. First he would come along one side, pinging coldly, evaluating; then he would cross over, ahead or astern, do the same thing from the other side. When finally satisfied he would pass overhead—or nearly so—and drop.

Listening to his propellers, trying to determine when he was starting his true run, then at the proper moment speeding up or slowing down a little, trying to make him miss, we got so that we instinctively knew when the closest charge of a pattern was due. We would cringe inwardly until we had felt it and survived. We were up against a professional and everyone in the ship knew it.

It was long after daybreak before we got clear of him and were able to come back to periscope depth, there to wait until night to surface. By that time, a match would not stay lighted inside the ship, nor would a cigarette burn. The slightest exertion made us badly out of breath, and a dull lassitude settled over us. But after the first few breaths of cool, fragrant night air we turned to with interest to see what our topsides looked like.

The shell had struck the after part of the bridge and exploded, tearing off a chunk of the cigarette deck and wrecking the twenty millimetre gun. Several pieces of light plating hung loosely, but the structure beneath was unscathed.

Two NIGHTS later it was our turn. We sighted a cloud of black smoke in the east, shortly before moonrise, and took off after it. Two hours later the smoke had turned into two ships proceeding in company, about a mile apart. We got their course and speed—twelve knots, due north, zigzagging. No escort.





We chose a position ahead of the two ships and slightly on their starboard bow, waited for the next zig. As soon as it came, our own rudder went over too. The moon was now well up and visibility all round was entirely too good to take any chances. We had to come in fast and get it over.

As the leading ship came into torpedo range, we turned our bow exactly on his and increased our speed to "full." We would shoot three torpedoes at the first ship, three at the second, and save the four in our stern tubes for whatever might develop.

Swiftly we approached. I could feel my pulse racing. Just a little closer—so close you can't miss. Here's the leading ship, an old style freighter making lots of smoke . . . he's nearly broadside to, now surely they can see us. . . .

"Range!"

"One five double oh!"

"Shoot!"

"Fire!" I could hear Jim's bellow from the conning tower. I felt the slight jolt as the fish went out. Three jolts. Three fish streaking for the first target.

Now we changed course and raced towards a firing position on the second ship, far astern of the first. I was conscious of the breeze whistling in my ears and the swish of the water as we tore through it.

"A light!" The starboard look out was shouting, pointing to the first ship. We were broadside to broadside, just past each other on opposite courses. There was a light on his deck, pointed over the side. I looked hard—our torpedoes should have reached there—sure enough, there were their wakes. Three up to him, only one going on beyond. It looked as if something were thrashing alongside. On his deck another light joined the first, and then a cloud of steam issued from his stack. A moment later we heard the whistle.

I cursed aloud. *Damn* the torpedoes! *Damn* them and their designers for ever! Why couldn't they build an efficient torpedo? Why did we have to carry the things all the way into enemy waters to prove they wouldn't work!

"Jim," I said bitterly into the mike, "we got two hits; good shooting. Neither exploded."

An answering whistle from the other ship, our present target, and

now the situation was critical indeed. With our ineffective torpedoes, if he should see us, turn to ram us . . .

But he didn't. He turned away, presented a perfect target, and we fired everything left in the forward tubes at him. It looked as if all three hit, and at least one exploded right under his stack. His steel hull folded up like paper, bow and stern rising high, centre going under water.

We circled him. As we watched, the broad V became sharper, then folded completely together, forecastle to poop deck, and sank from sight. The last thing we saw was the big bronze propeller, still spinning slowly.

A muffled reverberation from the north east called to mind the other ship. Gunfire. It made sense that he should carry a gun, but it might have been smarter of him not to have fired it now. For three hours, keeping well out of sight of the fleeing ship, we guided ourselves by the sporadic booming of the gun. The moonlight now seemed as bright as day, which ruled out any chance of our getting close enough on the surface to attack. It would have to be done submerged.

When we reached a satisfactory position on the freighter's bow, *Walrus* quietly slipped beneath the waves. This time we fired four torpedoes, the first aimed amidship, then two at the target's bow and stern, and the last one amidship again, right under the stack.

I held my breath for a frozen second, let it out with a sigh as I watched the first torpedo pass harmlessly under the target, looking exactly as it had looked during those years of training in Long Island Sound.

Number two fish hit at the bow. A small geyser of water and spray rose half way to the target's deck. Something had exploded. Not the war head, however; or at best only a small fraction of the T.N.T. supposed to be inside it.

"Time for the third torpedo, Skipper." Jim spoke quietly.

I swung the scope aft, caught the torpedo wake going into the rudder and propeller declivity. This one exploded; there was a flash of light, a cloud of white, steam like spray. The freighter shuddered under the impact. WHIRANNGG! There was no mistaking this noise.

"It's a hit!" Jim's excitement was plain. "Can I have a look, sir?"

"Wait a minute," I growled. "How about the fourth fish?"

"Time right now—mark!"

I looked for the wake, found it. This, too, looked exactly like a drill torpedo, set to run under. But it made no difference. The stern of the freighter had already disappeared under water, and its weight lifted the bow into the air as I watched. In ten more seconds the ship was vertical, straight up and down. Gear, debris of all kinds fell from the bridge into the sea in a cascade of junk.

"Let me see, *please!*" Jim was beside himself.

"Here!" I relinquished the periscope. "Stand by to surface—surface!" The whistle of air, the upward heave of *Walrus's* hull.

A shout from Jim. "He's sinking! Look at him go!"

From the control-room the Diving Officer started calling out the depths. At last: "Twenty-six and holding!"

"Open the hatch!" I rasped at Rubinoŭski. He whirled the hand wheel, and the heavy bronze hatch flew open. We leaped up the ladder.

The look-outs boiled up to the bridge behind us, followed by Tom and Jim. "Where is he?" Jim cried. The excitement of battle was in his voice.

I tried to make my own voice calm. "Gone, Jim. He's already sunk!"

A cry from a forward look out. "Something in the water, sir!" He pointed.

In the hollows of the shallow sea, several dark masses were clustered together. "Where are they?" Jim aimed his binoculars briefly in the indicated direction, dashed below. In a moment he reappeared with a bandoleer of ammunition slung round his shoulder and one of the ship's two Browning automatic rifles clutched in his hands. He fitted a clip from the bandoleer to the magazine of the gun.

"Left full rudder," I ordered. This would put us a little closer.

Afterwards I found it hard to explain why we did not leave at once, for there was no advantage to be gained from looking over our unhappy victims. We could not help them, and they were certainly close enough to Palau to make their way there without difficulty. It must have been a subconscious force, some insatiable need or motive of vengeance.

We coasted gently closer. Now people could be distinguished in the boats and life rafts, sitting motionless, faces turned towards us. A wave of passion shook me. This was the enemy! This the perpetrator of the Pearl Harbour crime! This the killer of innocent women and children in the Chinese war, and now again in the Philippines!

Suddenly Jim raised the automatic rifle to his shoulder before anyone

could stop him. He pulled back the bolt, aimed into the middle of the nearest lifeboat. I reached him just in time, grabbed the gun. His face was livid.

"Stop it, Jim!" I hissed savagely. "Stop it, or so help me I'll—" I never did know what I'd have said, for Jim, breathing hard, released his grip on the gun.

"Thanks, Skipper," he whispered. "I must have flipped my lid—I'm sorry! I—I—I don't know what came over me—"

I could sense the revulsion of feeling taking possession of him, and felt the same within myself, as the boatloads and raftloads drifted past. Stricken faces stared at us. Pathetic figures huddled together—not for warmth, for it was warm enough, but for fear of us. To those simple merchant seamen we must have seemed malevolent, inscrutable, the perpetrators of all that was evil.

OUR FIRST TWO days in the area were not characteristic of the remainder. Days went by in which we slowly wandered about in an oily flat sea without sighting another ship. Finally a small convoy bound for Palau added two more enemy ships to our score just before our time on station was up. Then again we were ordered to Midway—a big disappointment, as many of the crew had had their hearts set on a trip to Australia.

Two days before our scheduled departure from Midway, our orders from ComSubPac came in a bulky package labelled "Secret." We were to return to Area Seven, the scene of our first patrol.

One entry especially drew my attention:

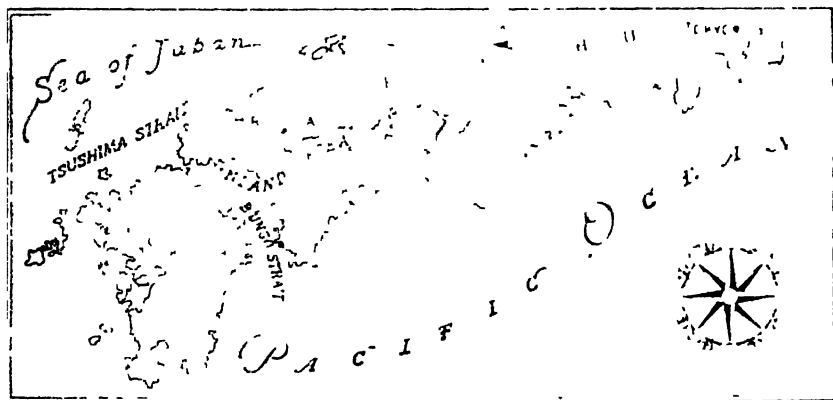
Particular caution is enjoined with regard to an old destroyer of the *Aki-kaze* class operating out of the Bungo Suido. This vessel has been unusually successful in anti-submarine work, and prefers the astern position when escorting. You will under no circumstances seek combat with it except under conditions of special advantage.

As I read, I remembered my conversation with Captain Blunt months before and his warning about Bungo Pete. "He even seems to know the names of his victims," he had said.

Before we got under way for the coast of Kyushu, changes were made in our crew. Fifteen men were left behind to fill the demands of new

construction and to carry on the rotation programme whereby, after a reasonable number of patrols, the entire crew of any submarine was gradually replaced. Eighteen new hands, all fresh from submarine school, reported aboard. The loss which affected the ward room most was good old steady Tom Schultz. Hugh Adams moved into his shoes as Engineer, not without some trepidation. Jerry Cohen, who had joined us before our last patrol, became Hugh's assistant, and Plotting Officer during battle stations. Our two new Ensigns, Patrick Donnelly and Cecil Throop, would be given general assignments under instruction.

The crew tried hard to show Tom how well he was liked. We held a special wake for him in the old Pan American Hotel, now known as Gooneville Lodge, presenting him with a gold wrist watch. Tom, in turn, insisted upon personally handling all our lines from the dock when we got under way.



CHAPTER 7

THE PATROL in Area Seven began with a week on station, within close sight of land, with no sign of the enemy except for an occasional aeroplane, and numbers of small fishing smacks with groups of straw-hatted Japanese out for a day's fishing.

During the early part of our second week we sank a big, heavily laden freighter and trapped another ship not far from where we had sunk the

first. Then, acting on an idea of Jim's, we ran south at full speed, and had moved in close to the coast in a totally new spot, by next morning. Two ships sunk in the same vicinity would be sure to bring trouble instead of more targets, as Jim put it, and if we moved closer to where our victims came from—both had been heading north—we might nab one before he was diverted.

He was right, too, for the very next day a small tanker came by. I told Jim that since he had found the ship he had the right to do it the honours while I took over his job as lookout.

Jim needed no urging. He grabbed the periscope eagerly, took over command as though born to it, and the conduct of his approach was beyond criticism. He even swung at the last minute to use the stern tubes instead of bow tubes, thus equalizing our torpedoes expenditure, and there was an unholy exultation in his face as he gave the final command: "Shoot!"

Three ships in four days—and not a death charge in return! We felt pretty cocky as we stood out into the centre of Area Seven again. Another week went by but though we changed position several times the Japanese refused to cooperate by appearing.

And then one night, after we had surfaced, Kohler called from below: "Captain! They're calling us on the radio!"

I hastily put on a pair of red goggles and climbed below. Kohler led me into the crew's mess compartment where a crowd was gathered round the entertainment radio. Dave Freeman was there, looking grave, and so was Donnelly. A woman's voice was coming over the loudspeaker.

"American submarines! she is saying—we regret to have to do this to you, but you have brought it upon yourselves. You have violated our waters, killed our sailors on the sea. For this you merit death, and death you shall have. While you are awaiting your last moments, this recording from home may make the thought of the future easier to face." The lilting voice stopped and the strains of a popular dance tune filled the crowded compartment.

"Who the hell is that?" I interjected angrily.

Dave said: "Haven't you heard her before, Captain? The men call her 'Tokyo Rose'."

Kohler nodded: "Yes sir. Usually she just plays music and hands out a load of baloney. Tonight, though, she was different."

"Dammit, Kohler!" I blazed. "I'll have the radio disconnected until we leave the area if anyone listens to her again!" Her words had been disturbing enough to me; who knew what their effect could be on some of our less experienced sailors?

"But she called us by name, Captain! She was telling that to us—to the *Walrus*!"

Dave nodded. "She said she had a special message for the crew of the U.S. submarine *Walrus*. She said she knew we were here, not far from the Bungo Suido, and that we had sunk some ships, but those were the last ones we'd ever sink."

The music stopped. "Men of the *Walrus*," the limpid voice said sweetly, "enjoy yourselves while you can, for eternity is a long, long time. Think of your loved ones, but don't bother to write because you'll never be able to mail the letters." She ended in a loud titter, almost a giggle. I had never heard anything quite so evil.

"Turn that radio off! Kohler, remember what I told you!" I went back to the bridge, more upset than I could let anyone see. I needed to think. No one on Midway—for that matter no one in the ship, either, except Jim—had known of our destination until after we had left. Yet somehow the Japanese propaganda ministry knew that *Walrus* was the submarine currently off Kyushu.

The rest of that night and the next day I did some heavy thinking. When next we surfaced there was one significant change in our routine. Our garbage contained several carefully prepared scraps of paper bearing the name U.S.S. *Octopus*, some official in appearance, some apparently from personal mail. Quin, entering into the spirit of it, had even made, by hand, a rubber stamp of the name. And all vestiges of the name *Walrus* had been carefully removed. Of course there was no longer a submarine in our navy named *Octopus*. I had chosen the name for that reason, as well as out of sentiment.

The garbage sacks were thrown overboard as usual, and as usual they floated aft into our wake, slowly becoming waterlogged. I had found that some were not so well weighted as others, and that those would probably remain afloat for an appreciable time.

I told no one that my nightly visits to the radio room were for the sole purpose of listening surreptitiously to Tokyo Rose's programme. But she never mentioned *Octopus*, nor, for that matter, did she refer to

Walrus again. The whole thing began to look like a waste of time and effort, for our men had to go over everything they put into the garbage very carefully, and every day Quin had to prepare authentic-looking papers with *Octopus* on them. But we kept it up during the rest of our time in the area.

There wasn't much time left, as a matter of fact, and our "bag" of three ships was beginning to look like the total for that patrol. Then, just before we were due to leave the area, on a rainy, warm night, with a high, uneasy sea running, the radar got a contact.

Jim's voice came over the announcing system: "Captain, it's a good sized convoy. At least two of them are escorts. Course one six-zero, speed about ten!"

"Steer one six zero!" I told the helmsman. "All ahead two thirds."

We ran on this for several minutes. Jim's voice again: "Captain, we've got eleven big ships, three or four smaller ones. One other astern, also small. They're zigzagging round base course one six-five, speed fourteen knots. We're almost dead ahead of them. Range to the leading escort is ten thousand yards."

"What's the range to the stern escort?" These fellows had come out of the Bungo, all right, and that stern escort must be nobody else but Bungo Pete himself in his old favourite position, astern, the clean up spot. Bungo would have worked out that after an attack a submarine was most apt to wind up astern of the convoy, and out of torpedoes, too, until a reload could be effected. This would almost unquestionably be true for a submerged attack, very likely so for a surfaced one. Here I caught my breath as an idea rose, full blown, in my brain: Bungo might very well be an old time Japanese submariner himself! As such he was doubly dangerous.

"Range to stern escort—we can hardly make him out—about fifteen thousand yards." Jim fell silent for a minute. "Zig! The convoy has zigged to his left. Now on course one three zero!"

We followed suit. "Keep plotting and checking his zigs, Jim," I said. "When we get them down pat we'll start in." I began to weigh the various factors of the problem. Bungo was astern. Instead of turning towards the rear of the convoy, the natural thing to do after shooting our torpedoes, maybe we should turn back towards the head. This would keep us clear of Bungo for a while, and in the confusion we might get

away with it. One thing to avoid was the temptation to dive, which would make us subject to another of those thorough, unhurried and practically lethal creeping attacks.

"Another zig, right this time! Course now one six five! Recommend increase speed to fourteen knots!"

"All ahead standard!" I ordered. "Sound the general alarm."

"Hugh," I said to Adams, who was forward on the bridge, "we might be getting gunfire here. If I order everyone below, you go too. You can be the last one down, but you're the Diving Officer and we can't take a chance on your being knocked out. Now, have all the bridge guns mounted and put two extra men on each mount."

In a few moments a veritable arsenal was handed up the bridge hatch and the look-outs were setting the guns in place. The twenty millimetres, stowed in pressure proof containers, had to be lifted out and placed in their mounts. The fittings were set in their sockets, and the automatic rifles we leaned in a corner. Near each gun we made a neat pile of extra ammunition.

"Angle on the bow, port thirty five!" Jim's voice in the bridge speaker. It was time to make our move.

"Right full rudder! All ahead flank!" The diesels groaned with the suddenly increased load. Big waves leaped high on to our decks. It was dark, lamp-black dark. Only the faintest hint of grey above the tossing, dirty sea.

"Bridge! Recommend course three one zero!" I had to wipe the water off the face of the bridge gyro repeater before I could read it.

"Steady on three-one zero!"

Now *Walrus's* speed increased even more. No longer rising to the sea, she smashed through it like a wild thing. Sea after sea rolled over her hullnose, pounded against our bridge front. It started to rain again. The fresh water felt good, washing some of the salt from my face and out of my eyes.

Jim called up ranges and bearings to me. He had got us into the best position possible. We were going in astern of the leading escort, and were well clear and ahead of the port flanking tin can.

"How much farther to go?" I asked him.

"I reckon to start shooting at two thousand. They're all pretty well bunched. We'll shoot a spread of six fish forward, then swing for the

stern tubes, shoot them, and in the meantime reload with the four torpedoes left forward. Then if we get a chance we can let go with those four. That will leave us only one fish, in the after torpedo room."

"Good," I said into the mike. I felt curiously detached and emotionless. The die had been cast when I directed that the rudder be put right. Now we had to ride it out to a finish. "What's the range now?" I had been searching for the targets, was still unable to see them.

"Three three double oh! Recommend change course to two nine oh! We're all ready. We're starting to open outer doors now."

"Left to two nine zero!"

Out of nothing a solid mass of ships, dead ahead and to starboard, popped into view. "Targets!" I bawled. I flung my binoculars into the T.B.T. bracket, twisted it both ways, taking in the whole picture. Well to port, a single smaller vessel, the leading escort. No need to worry about him. Far to starboard, a single tiny shape, the port flanker. He would be a problem soon.

But the ships ahead—we couldn't miss! There must be three columns at least, solid black against a lowering greyness.

Jim kept the ranges coming and, hanging on to *Huldrus's* screening bridge, I kept my binoculars fixed on the leading ship. It had stopped raining, and our targets were outlined distinctly for me now. Two tankers in the near column and a large freighter bringing up the rear. All big ships—big and fast.

"Two thousand yards!"

I risked a quick glance to starboard—the port flanking tin-can was much nearer. We had a couple of minutes to go. "Stand by forward!" Into the mike. "I've got the T.B.T. on the leading ship, Jim! Let me know as each one goes out! Shoot!"

"One's away," blared the bridge speaker. A pregnant pause. "Two's away!" More time. I took my glasses off the T.B.T., swung round to inspect the nearing destroyer. "Three's away! Four's away!" I looked forward. Impossible to see the white wakes in the heaving black water. "Five's away!" The oncoming tin can was looming larger all the time. "Number six away! All torpedoes expended forward! Range to target, one-three double-oh!"

"Left full rudder!" I yelled the order. *Huldrus* scudded round, the starboard mufflers roaring their choked protest.

"Recommend course zero nine zero!"

I grabbed the mike: "No good, Jim. Too close to the port flanking tin-can!" I tried to speak calmly. "How about one-seven zero with a left ninety gyro for the stern tubes?"

"Roger!"

"Oregon, steady on one seven zero!" I ordered. Then I picked up the mike, ran to the after T.B.T., plugged it in. "Stand by aft! After T.B.T.!" I said into the mike.

The after bridge speaker: "Standing by aft! We're all set below, Captain! Range one two five oh!"

"Shoot!" I had the T.B.T. on a ship in the second column.

"Seven's away! Eight's away!" I took another look at the destroyer. We were running nearly right away from him, gaining, with our temporary speed advantage. "Nine away! Ten away! All torpedoes expended, Captain! We're reloading forward."

Ten torpedoes—we were lighter by better than thirty thousand pounds, and about seventy thousand dollars' worth of complicated mechanism was out there running in the ocean.

And we were in something of a box, too. Any change in course would make it easier for the approaching destroyer to see us.

"Range to the near escort, dead astern!" I called.

"Range to escort, one nine double oh!" He *was* close!

Something had happened in the direction of the convoy—a flash. Then another, and another! No sound—there couldn't be any sound, with all the natural noises of wind and sea going on. These were all torpedo hits, of that there could be no doubt, and probably from our bow salvo. Our stern shots would be a minute or so later getting there.

Back to the escort. Still coming on. "Range to escort, one nine five oh!" That was not good. We should be pulling ahead faster than that.

Flash! Another hit! And then, flash flash—two, almost together. Now it was evident that the convoy was breaking up. Suddenly it was no longer an entity; it had disintegrated into eleven different ships—all motivated by only one heedless, reckless, awful necessity—to get away from the convoy centre.

"Good God!" My outburst came without conscious volition. A violent cone of white-hot flame screamed into the heavens! It towered over the convoy, towered over us too, turned the night into broad daylight!



In the insane light of the explosion the leading tanker was visible, broken in half, bow and stern floating idiotically with nothing between them. The second tanker seemed all right; so did the third ship in that column. The one which had blown up must have been in the middle column. As I watched, the masts of the freighter, last in the rear column of ships, grew shorter, his stack disappeared—and I was looking at his bottom.

Then the horrible, sudden, crashing noise of the holocaust reached us. It could only have been an ammunition ship. No wonder the other ships of the convoy had been trying to get away!

"Captain! What is it!" Jim's voice on the bridge speaker.

"I'm okay—come up here!"

Jim arrived in time to see the second tanker burst into flames. His comment was identical to mine: "Good God! Did we do that?"

I pointed out the tin can on our tail. "He can't miss seeing us now. Get back on the radar and give me the picture."

Jim ran down the hatch. His voice came in a couple of seconds: "Convoy has scattered. We have only nine pips on the 'scope left. They're really in a mess there, all right."

"What's the range to the tin can?"

"Near destroyer—one seven-double oh!"

He was closing. No doubt about it: we were in trouble. Normally we should dive. Only one other thing to do.

"Range to convoy?"

"Convoy—nearest ship one-five-double-oh. The rest on up to three oh double-oh!"

That settled it. At least one fleeing ship was nearer to us than the destroyer. Presumably he would be jittery.

"Right full rudder!" I ran back to the fore part of the bridge. "All right, boys! Man those guns!" They jumped to them with alacrity. "When we go by this ship, put everything you have into his bridge! Never mind anything else, just his bridge!"

I took a bearing, gave Oregon a course so as to pass starboard to starboard at about a quarter of a mile. This would put the Jap ship between us and the destroyer escort. As the rudder went over, Jim informed me that our torpedo reload was completed. We were ready for business again, with four fish forward and one aft.

The range closed swiftly. Larger and larger loomed the blunt, black bow of the ship—a freighter. I don't think they even saw us. At point-blank range we swept his bridge with everything we had. It was grim work holding the twenties on target; the two men forward were half under water a good part of the time. I could see the tracer bullets arching into the enemy's square windowed pilot house as we swept on.

I shot a quick glance across his stern. The pursuing destroyer was still heading more or less for the bow of the ship behind which we had disappeared. Now the freighter wavered in his course. Perhaps we had got the steersman—he swung off sharply to the left, towards the onrushing tin can, who saw it too, put his rudder hard over, barely avoided colliding. This gave us an opening.

"Range to destroyer!" I yelled. "Stand by aft! Angle on the bow, starboard ninety! Shift to after T.B.T.!" I ran aft, plugged in the mike.

"Range to destroyer—hundred!" said the speaker.

"Give him twenty fathoms!" I waited an age, it seemed to me. It could not have been more than ten seconds.

"Set!"

"Shoot!" I shouted. There was only one torpedo left aft, but it might do some good, if we had luck. I reached to unplug the mike; suddenly the whole side of the destroyer blossomed in red and orange. Heedless, I ran forward as the tearing crack of several shells and the screaming of machine gun bullets passed close overhead. In the midst of this came the twin chatter of our after mount; the men detailed to the after twenty-millimetre were holding it steady into the black hull of the destroyer.

And then, cataclysmically, a mushroom of white water burst in the middle of the other ship, hoisted him up amidships, his back broken. His guns stopped, except for one small one which kept going until the black ocean closed over it. Up the id, chaos. Ships cutting madly in all directions. Keep going. Have to keep going. We aimed our course to go between two burning ships. Just beyond we found another, all alone, making off to the west. We drew up alongside, less than a mile away, keeping out of the light of the fires. We turned towards it.

Angle on the bow, port eighty, range fifteen hundred—Fire! Two fish. Two left. We put our rudder right, ran past him on the opposite course, saw both torpedoes hit. They were duds. I raved with impotent fury at the sight.

Nothing to do but come round again. We turned madly in a full circle, lined him up again—IIRC! That did it. One torpedo hit and exploded and he sagged down by the bow. Maybe he'd sink, maybe not, but we had no more fish to make sure.

Another tearing, ripping noise overhead. Then another. Two ships shooting. Bungo raring up from his position astern to join the fight and someone else, either the starboard flanker or the lead escort. We were trapped—we'd have to dive.

"All hands below!" I motioned to Hugh impatiently.

"Rudder amidships—all the id emergency!" I aimed for the narrow space between the two flaming ships again. If we could get between them once more—I knew there was no escort vessel on *that* side—it would force the two destroyers to slow down to avoid their own ships. That might be our chance.

I pushed the bridge speaker button for the general announcing system.

Manœuvring give it everything you've got! They did too. *Walrus* arrowed for the hole, slipped through it. The two destroyers, shadowy figures at fairly long range, were cut off, had to shoot over the wrecked ships behind us. Both were firing continuously, the one from the convoy's rear particularly well. That must be Bungo, and he was using salvo fire with methodical precision. His shells were tearing overhead, and one or two dropped close alongside, kicked up great spouts of water. No question about it: old Bungo was a good naval officer and ran a tight, tough ship. His destroyer—*Akizaze* class, all right—was shooting at least two to the other's one, and accurately despite the weather.

Another salvo. I could see all four flashes from Bungo's guns. Then there was a blinding flash. Stars and pinwheels and fireballs whirled about me, all emanating from a round, sunlike fire emitting rays of white-hot fire—the fire of Bungo Pete. He looked benign, friendly, despite the fireballs.

CHAPTER 8

WE WERE well on our way back to Pearl Harbour when I opened my eyes. Jim was standing beside my bunk, smiling at me. "What happened?" I managed to say.

"Nothing much. You just stopped a Jap four-inch shell all by yourself.

and have been out for three days, that's all And your right leg's broken, so don't try to get up " I fumbled for it The cast felt as if it occupied half the bunk

"How did I get down here?"

"We heard the shell hit—you were talking on the mike, remember? Rubinoffski and I found you out cold We hauled you below and dived, and we've been running ever since We laid you out on the ward room table to set your leg and sew you up

"How badly hurt am I? I whispered

Jim began to edge for the door "The Pharmacist's Mate says you'll be fine You just had a bad concussion and a couple of bad cuts besides the break A wive of pain hit me as he went out

I don't remember much about the trip, but as we approached Pearl I became more lucid and was able to think of the future One thing was obvious I was joined as skipper of *Walrus*

In the Hospital at Pearl Harbour Captain Blunt brought up unofficially the question of who my successor should be

"Have you thought of giving her to Jim Bledsoe sir? I asked

"Why, no he's pretty junior um — He sucked his pipe

'He sure is, Captain, but listen to this I told Captain Blunt in detail how Jun had made a masterly approach all by himself, and I told him what a great fighting heart he had I wound up with the clincher that he was already skipper of *Walrus* in fact, having assumed command upon my incapacity and that the ship's morale would inevitably suffer if someone less experienced in submarine combat were put over him

Old Joe Blunt was impressed, I could see that He puffed the bowl of his pipe lovingly, slid it into his pocket 'We'll see what can be done, Rich,' he said and I knew I had won

Jim and Keith were the most fun'ful about coming to see me, though the rest of the crew and officers came also One day Kohler, Larto and a group of others touched me deeply by bringing in a small metal model of *Walrus* which they had all had a hand in making "She's made out of a C R S bolt," explained Kohler —C R S being the Navy equivalent of stainless steel "Yah," grinned Larto, his teeth flashing, 'they still wonder what happened to that main induction gag bolt" And then Russo, with considerable smirking and bashful humming and hawing, hauled in his own personal offering which had been temporarily left in

the hall: a huge cake surmounted by a submarine made of icing sugar.

The day before their departure for patrol, all the ward room came to see me, and I bade them good bye with a lump in my throat. As they filed out, Jim hung back. "Skipper," he said, "we won't be coming back here for a while. We're going to Australia on this trip. Our patrol area is off Truk, and after we're relieved we'll head for Brisbane."

"Why, you lucky dog, you," I said. "How did you manage it?"

"Just kept talking it up."

"They say it's a wonderful country, wonderful people. . ."

"Especially the wonderful people," Jim agreed. His grin was a bit self-conscious as he said it.

Walrus had hardly been gone a day when Joe Blunt showed up again. "Rich, you mentioned in your patrol report that Tokyo Rose called the *Walrus* by name— did you hear her?"

"Yes, I sure did!"

"Well, as you know, we've been wondering where they got their dope. One other boat, before you, heard Tokyo Rose call them by name, and of course old Bungo Pete makes a point of showing us that he knows the names of all our boats in Area Seven. But now, for the first time, he's missed. An intelligence report arrived this morning, and it mentions the Japs as knowing *Walrus* had been in the area, but goes on to say that the old *Octopus* also made an attack on a convoy, and was sunk by shell fire from the destroyer *Akizaze*. Can you account for that? What's so damned funny!"

For I was laughing helplessly, pounding the bed in my mirth and relief. I finally recovered myself sufficiently to tell him of the garbage stunt. He burst into a roar of laughter.

"Well, I'll be switched! So that's how Bungo gets his dope— pawing over our garbage! Doesn't miss a trick, does he?"

"Do you know who Bungo Pete is?" I asked.

"Sure we know! He is Captain Tatco Nakame of the Japanese Navy. He was a submariner and was known for being a mean old dog, too."

So my deduction had been right! But why had he given up chasing us? I asked Captain Blunt, and he chuckled. "You guess. I've been guessing for three hours." He waited. "How many submarines were there in the attack?" he asked.

"Only us."

"Guess again. There were two, the *Walrus* and the *Octopus*. From the hell you raised in that convoy he was certain there must have been two subs attacking. When he saw the shell explode on your bridge he decided he had done for one of them. After that he waited about for the other submarine to show up again." Old Blunt's grin threatened to split his face in two. "This makes twice you've outsmarted him, Rich. He knows the *Walrus* by now, and unless I miss my guess by a mile he knows you also by name. He'd like nothing so much as to have your scalp to hang on his belt."

"I'll remember," I promised. But my sickbed in the Pearl Harbour Navy Yard Hospital seemed a million miles away from Tateo Nakame and His Imperial Japanese Majesty's ship *Akikaze*.

Lying in the hospital, I lost all track of time. The weary days and weeks dragged on. When finally I could hobble about, life took on a little more interest. The big news was about Jim. He had entered Brisbane harbour flying a cockscorn of eight Jap flags, signifying eight ships sunk.

Jim, so the letter from Keith read, had been like a wild man. All eight ships had been in a single convoy which he had chased half-way across the ocean and attacked repeatedly until he had wiped it out. The official endorsement to his report of *Walrus's* fifth patrol said the same thing in naval jargon: "This patrol must go down in submarine history as one of the most daringly conducted and persistently fought submarine actions of the war."

Jim could now have anything in Australia for the asking.

When, nearly five months after my injury, I was able to limp with a cane, Captain Blunt put me to work on the continuing problem of unexplained torpedo failures. After extensive tests it became apparent that the delicate magnetic feature in the firing mechanism of the war heads was totally undependable in service. The mechanical part of the exploder, which should invariably go off upon impact, was faulty too. And the torpedoes habitually ran at erratic depths that made it a matter of luck whether they hit or ran harmlessly under the target. The more we got into the problem, the angrier we got. All this should have been found out on the proof ranges long ago.

Washington took the maddening view that, while we were right, a

new exploder then in development would be the answer to everything—when it was ready. Maybe in a year!

It occurred to me that if we could rebuild the mechanical firing gadget with lighter parts and completely disconnect the magnetic part of the exploder, we might get acceptable results. As to the depth settings, the skippers, knowing what was wrong, could make allowances.

Experiments showed that what I suggested was feasible, and reports from the first few boats which took the modified exploders to sea were jubilant. Now torpedoes were fired with the certainty that they would function properly if they hit. The only problem remaining was the only one we should have had to worry about from the beginning: hitting the target.

With the final solution of the torpedo problem, I found myself detailed as Officer in Charge of the Attack Teacher, virtually the same gadget which *Walrus's* crew had trained on during our precommissioning days in New London.

Shortly after this, Stocker Kane showed up with the *Nerka*, and we spent many pleasant hours together before he set out on his next patrol. He talked a lot about Hurry and Laura. "They've been corresponding ever since you all left New London," he said. "Hurry doesn't think Laura's happy, though. She says Jim doesn't write enough. Hurry's always looking about for someone to mother a little."

"Maybe she's working on me, too," I said. I told him of the letter she had written me.

"She told me she was going to. She thinks you ought to get married, Rich. Leave it to Hurry! She probably thinks you ought to have been the one to marry Laura, instead of Jim."

I managed to smooth my startled look into a grin.

THREE WEEKS later I was, of course, on the dock when *Walrus* came in. She was something to see as she came bravely round ten-ten dock. From her bullnose to the top of the periscope supports was a perfect clothesline of small Japanese flags.

Jim had made three patrols in and out of Australia. His second run had been better than the first, and on his third he had entered an enemy harbour, sunk two ships and shelled a fortified island. He had sunk a Japanese cruiser near Palau, and he had put three torpedoes into one of

the sixty-thousand ton Jap battle wagons. A Japanese submarine had fired a torpedo at him; seeing it first himself, he had swung away to avoid the torpedo track, then fired back two torpedoes out of his stern tubes, sinking the submerged Jap. With only nine torpedoes left, three forward and six aft, he had engaged in a melee with a six ship convoy, during which he had actually backed into action at one point and sank three more ships. Finally, with no torpedoes remaining, he had attacked one of the surviving freighters with the deck gun and every automatic weapon available, silencing her defensive battery and sinking her—and all without receiving a scratch in return.

The crowd which awaited *Walrus* was the biggest I had ever seen for any submarine. Jim looked wonderful, bronzed, alert, brimming with self confidence. "Hi, Rich!" he said. "How's the leg?" He turned to the Admiral and Captain Blunt. "Here's the man who's responsible for all I know about swimming, Admiral." He winked at me as the congratulations engulfed him.

That night when, at Jim's request, I joined my old comrades and the new lads, Knobby Robertson, at the Royal, I realized finally that I had lost *Walrus* completely. There was a difference about the men. They looked the same—they *were* the same—but the stories they told, the songs they sang were all new, and with each story retold I felt myself drifting away from them a little farther. Nearly a year had elapsed, *Walrus* had made three hard hitting, supremely successful patrols since I had last seen them. This was their party, not mine. I wondered if Jim's invitation had only been politeness after all. He was drinking heavily, but when I started to leave he grabbed me.

"No, you don't! Not yet, Skipper. I mean Rich! I got something I want to tell you." He pushed me into the next room, kicked the door shut and sat on the bed. He held out a bottle.

"Pour a drink!"

"No, thanks. Don't you want to save this for later, Jim?"

"Pour a drink, I said!" The bottle wavered in his hand. I took it, poured some in a glass, pretended to sip it.

"That's better. Listen." Jim's eyes were bloodshot, his face puffing. "I've been meaning to tell you this for a long time—took too much whisky so I could. Listen. I'm a louse."

"No, you're not, Jim. Leave it. We can talk tomorrow."

"Siddown, Rich. The Captain of the *Walrus*, the best damn submarine in the Navy, wants to talk to ya."

I sat. There seemed nothing else to do.

"I've been doing some thinking. Not just these last three patrols. Before that. 'Member when you stopped my qualification on the old *S-16*? I swore then I would get even with you. I was gonna sabotage everything you tried to do. I was gonna mess you up. Laura told me not to. Said the war would find you out for what you were. Said I should stick it with you for crew's sake."

I sat staring, embarrassed to hear him.

Jim took a deep swig. "I pretended to like you, and went along with you and the *Walrus*, and all the time I hated your guts. All the way out to Japan I hated your guts. Then when ole Bungo Pete got after us I saw a real submarine skipper in action. I realized it was you that saved us all and that I didn't know the first thing about being a skipper. When you gave me *Walrus* I found out."

"You're drunk, Jim. . . ."

"Down! I'm not through yet. Gotta get this thing off my chest. This is war—maybe I'll get sunk nex' time—maybe you will. May never get another chance to talk." He took another swig, wiped his mouth.

"So now I'm skipper of the *Walrus*. You gave her to me. You talked ole man Blunt into it. And I've had three patrols to learn what it's like to be all alone. There's nobody out there to tell the skipper what to do. . . . You know that? You're all alone. You got no buddies. You got friends—sure, everybody on the ship's your friend—but you got to work it all out yourself, 'cause you're all alone on your own. That's what you been trying to teach me, Rich. I want you to know that I think you're a great man. You're my best friend, an' you're wunnerful—an' I'm sorry I was such a louse—an'—I already wrote to Laura and told her so. . . ."

The bottle slipped from his hands. His voice trailed off into an unintelligible mumble. I laid him back on the bed, pulled off his shoes, trousers and shirt, threw a blanket over him. I went out quietly, closing the door softly behind me. I felt sorry for him and oddly at peace.

WHEN *Walrus* departed again, I was there to see her off, and so was Keith, who was being rotated. She looked beautiful in her coat of new grey paint, beautiful, lean and deadly.

I had not seen much of my old shipmates during the past weeks. I was busy with my routine duties and they were enjoying their deserved freedom from care at the Royal Hawaiian. I caught a glimpse of Jim once, driving in a station wagon with Joan Lastrada beside him. As she turned attentively towards him the breeze rippled her heavy black hair.

Three weeks after *Walrus's* departure I sought out the Chief of Staff. My name had been restored to the active list a while back, but since then every available boat had been assigned to some other skipper. I was ready to put up a beef, but Captain Blunt didn't give me a chance. "Sit down, Rich. I was about to send for you." His voice was grim. "Do you know what day this is?"

"Yes, sir. Tuesday, the twenty fifth."

"It's the day the *Nerka* was due back from patrol."

"Was due! That rose again. Not Stocker Kane!"

"Was due, Rich. We won't see her again." Blunt spoke gently, sorrowfully. "She was a grand ship, and Kane was one of the best."

"What happened to her?" I cried. "Where did she go?"

For once the battered pipe lay unnoticed on the desk top. Blunt met my eyes steadily. "She was in Area Seven. That makes six boats that have been lost there. Old Nakame has been claiming the *Nerka* for two weeks."

I couldn't believe it. Poor Stocker Kane! Poor Hurry! "How did it happen—did Bungo give any hint?" I was holding a wake, but I couldn't help it.

"The old fellow is too smart for that. He is still apparently picking up garbage sacks, despite our caution to the boats about them, and is getting their names out of them."

I was counting on my fingers. "Out of the last six boats that have gone into Area Seven, he's sunk three!"

"That's right. And of the last two, he's sunk both of them. And Jim Bledsoe is in there now."

"*Walrus*," I gasped. "Why did you send the *Walrus*?" Jim's already made seven consecutive runs—the whole ship is tired. They deserve a rest! Not this! Why, this is suicide!"

"Easy, Rich." Blunt's eyes were steady, but his face looked old, troubled. "ComSubPac has orders to keep the Bungo Suido and Kii

Suido under surveillance. Maybe the Jap fleet's in there—I don't know. Someday maybe Admiral Nimitz will tell us. In the meantime, all we can do is send in our best boats, let them know what they're up against, and try to prepare them the best we know how. The *Walrus* has been in the area nearly a week already, and has sunk three ships. Two the first night, and one several days later. If there's anyone who can handle themselves in there, it's Jim Bledsoe and your old crew. But that's not why I wanted to see you. I think we've got a ship for you. That please you?"

Would it! I started up eagerly at the news.

"The *Eel* is coming in from Balboa, and they think their skipper has pneumonia. You can have her as soon as she gets in."

It turned out that the trouble with the *Eel's* skipper was tuberculosis, and every man in her whole complement had to be sent up for observation. When I got my new ship, that's exactly what I got—a ship. Bare.

Not that getting a crew assigned was difficult. With the normal rotation system in full swing, there were ample experienced men. Some of the old *Walrus* crew who had been left behind when she last departed asked specially to be assigned to the *Eel*. Among these were Quin and Oregon, both now First Class Petty Officers with war experience which belied their youth.

My best piece of luck, however, was in getting Keith assigned as Executive Officer. The rest of the officers were taken from the various relief crews which were the usual rotation assignments. A thin, nervous-looking Lieutenant named Buckley Williams came as Gunnery and Torpedo Officer, and another Lieutenant, Al Dugan, heavy-set and phlegmatic in appearance but already known for his sure touch on the dive, as Engineer and Diving Officer.

Eel was a brand-new Portsmouth-built boat. She had a thicker skin and heavier frames than the old *Walrus*, a larger conning tower with more gear in it, a smaller bridge and the very latest in radar. In her engine-rooms were four of the new ten-cylinder double-crankshaft Fairbanks-Morse diesels. On deck she carried the same gun armament as *Walrus*, except for a new five-inch gun; and she had brought out from the States a full load of brand-new electric torpedoes, the wakeless kind. Altogether she was a wonderful command—a real dream-boat.

After three weeks of backbreaking organization and training I made

an appointment with Captain Blunt. I was ready to report *Eel* as in all respects ready for a combat assignment. The moment I opened the door to his office I knew that something was wrong. He was standing alone, looking out of the window at the black waters of Pearl Harbour, hands clenched behind his back. He didn't turn when he heard the door open. "That you, Rich?" Upon my affirmative, he told me to sit down. Still he just stood there. I stood also, waiting, a cold foreboding clutching at my heart.

"Then, without turning, he began to speak softly, almost tenderly. "There are some parts of that ocean out near Japan which are worth more than any material value can ever express. They are parts which are hallowed by our heroic dead. One day God, in His infinite wisdom, may let us see the reason why some men must die young that others may live to a useless old age -why men like me, who have never heard a shot or seen a torpedo boat in anger, must be the arbiters of life and death for younger and better men."

He paused, turned to face me. "When did it happen?" I asked quietly.

"Maybe it hasn't happened!" He turned away again, almost fiercely. "This might just be their propaganda claim!"

"Jim was not due out till tomorrow, was he? Should we have heard from him?"

"Rich, we had him reporting weather every three days from his area. Three days ago he sent a message, giving the weather and telling us that so far his total bag was six ships. He had only four torpedoes left, all aft. Ordinarily we would have had him come back, but we have to keep a watch on the Bungo, and ~~we~~ have to have those weather reports. So we told him to stay till tomorrow, when the *Tuna* is scheduled to move in to relieve him. Bungo Pete claims to have sunk him the same night he sent his message. Another one was due this morning, but he made no transmission."

"Maybe he's only been damaged and his antenna or his radio is out of commission."

"Maybe so. Anyway, we can't send any more boats into Seven. You were right, it *is* suicide. I've already sent a message to the *Tuna* to stay clear. If only there were a way of eliminating Nakame! Until we do, I'm afraid we'll have to give up this much of our assigned mission."

"Let me go into Seven! I can get him!" I spoke with a surge of

confidence and rage. "Give us just a couple of days to get ready." I argued a long time, finally got down to pleading with the old man.

At first he wouldn't hear of it, but I was determined, reckless, and at last the tide swung in my favour. Bungo Pete had to go! *Walrus* had outwitted him twice before, with a little luck. Now *Eel* would not only outwit him, but sink him—and we'd not need luck!

When we finally shoved off, it looked as though somehow word of our mission might have leaked out. A great crowd of submariners gathered silently on the dock to see us off, and I could feel the cumulative force of their unspoken thought. The Admiral was there, of course, and so was Captain Blunt, and as we backed clear the band struck up "Sink 'Em All." They kept playing the same tune over and over until we had headed up beyond ten ten dock and the submarine pier had drifted beyond our sight.



CHAPTER 9

WAR RARELY generates personal animosities between members of the opposing forces, for it is too big for that. The hatred is there, but it is a larger hatred; a hatred for everything the enemy stands for, for his very way of life. Individuals mean nothing in this mammoth hate, and that is why, after the fighting is over, it is possible to respect and even like the man who lately wished to kill you.

Bungo Pete, however, had done us great personal injury, and had thereby lost his anonymity. On the trip west he was the only thing I could think of—Captain Tateo Nakame, Imperial Japanese Navy. He was no doubt a Jap hero because of the number of U.S. subs he had destroyed. To Keith and me he was a devil, and needed to be destroyed in turn. And on his side Nakame was doubtless gloating over having at last squared accounts with *Walrus*, the submarine which had dared to

outwit him twice. He might even know my name, just as I knew his.

With this in mind we had brought along a lot of old *Walrus* stationery and some papers made up with rubber stamps and other markings of the name *Walrus*. Keith and Quin made certain that the name *Eel* would nowhere appear in our garbage sacks, but that the name *Walrus* would with normal frequency. And I wrote my own name in several normal places. In this way the *Walrus* would once again appear to have escaped Bungo Pete. When, on our first night in Area Seven, I directed the cook to bring garbage topside and dump it, we were beginning our mission of vengeance. *Walrus* had come back to haunt Bungo Pete and kill him if she could.

A freighter sent to the bottom south of the Bungo was our first calling card. It took him about fifteen minutes to go down—ample time to radio in word of our presence. That night, having first dropped our garbage near where the freighter had been sunk, we headed for the other end of Area Seven.

Two days more, with only the ubiquitous fishing boats in sight, and then we sighted ma's. Two ships hugging the coast and a tin-can, patrolling to seaward. Not Bungo, however. *Eel* manoeuvred between the escort and his convoy. Four stern tubes at the tin-can and he joined his ancestors in a cloud of mingled flame, smoke and spray. Then for the two ships. One hit apiece. It was enough. That night we made sure our garbage would not sink and threw over a couple of extra bags of it for good measure. Then we raced for the Bungo Surdo.

We had left our calling cards on both sides of the entrance to the Inland Sea. Now it was ~~time~~ time to play it slow and easy. "We'll let it jell for a while, Keith," I told him. "We've raised enough Cain round here. He'll come."

But he didn't. And then, on the third day, as Keith and I looked back over the boats which had been lost, and on our own experiences in *Walrus*, a certain pattern in Bungo Pete's operations began to take shape. Stocker Kane and the *Nerka* had been in Area Seven for three weeks before Bungo had got them. Jim likewise. So had we, on our fourth patrol, before he came out. His early attack on our first patrol, after only a few hours in the area, must have been an accident. Evidently he studied the tactics of his intended victim, waited for them to become clear to him, then sallied forth to lay his trap.

Bungo would be puzzled at the apparent reappearance of *Walrus*, would remember that twice before he had thought he had sunk her, and twice before been fooled. Once he had even swallowed evidence of the existence of an entirely fictitious submarine. It was logical that he would want to wait and evaluate for a while. But how would he be getting information? We had seen no one enter or leave the Bungo, except the freighters. . . .

"Of course!" I said to Keith. "The fishing boats! They are his look outs. They find the sacks of garbage for him! Just plain, simple old Japanese fishermen, but he tells them where and when to look, and he sits back and analyses the results!"

"Then you think he may be waiting for more garbage?"

"Nope! He's got that by now. But right now he doesn't know where we are. No point in just rushing out to where a ship was sunk—we'd be gone. He wants a contact of some other kind, one where there might be a chance of our sticking about for a while to give him time to come after us." An idea was growing. "Keith," I said, "let's go find us a fisherman hey?"

It was the next day before we came across one. We had purposely moved a goodly distance away from the Bungo Suido. Our find was a wooden boat with a sort of platform on which half a dozen straw hatted figures sat cross legged, tending fishing lines and rods. The day was balmy and sunny, though in the eastern sky storm clouds were gathering.

The submerged *Eel* swam silently towards the fishing boat, passed close to it, periscope up. Nothing disturbed the monumental calm of the wizened greybeards under the straw hats. . . .

"Keith," I muttered, as he took a look at them, "if this is the best kind of help Bungo has got, the old rascal is slipping."

Keith chuckled as he put the 'scope down. "Who ever tried to get discovered before? These guys have probably never seen a submarine in their lives, and never expect to."

"We'll arrange that!" I called down the hatch: "Control, watch your depth. We're going to go right alongside this little guy!"

Eel turned round again. We must have been less than five yards away from the boat as we passed this time, and I was looking through the periscope practically under one of the straw hats.

He was an old Jap in the classical mould. A long, wispy, grey beard

ended in a point on his chest. His face was leathery, scamed from years under the sun's unshaded rays. His eyes were closed and he was the picture of peace and contentment as he sat there.

The picture changed suddenly when the old man opened his eyes. It must have been the noise of the water rippling past our extended periscope, or perhaps the shadow of the most tremendous fish he had ever seen. His eyes grew as large as two butter plates, and his mouth popped wide open. I could have sworn I heard him scream with terror—he jumped to his feet, pointed frantically right at me. The other five old men hopped up as if stung, crowded to his side, all six mouths wide open now, a dozen eyes staring with stupefied terror. They looked over into the water—no doubt our grey hull and black topsides could plainly be seen beneath them—and gesticulated violently, pointing down.

Through our sonar equipment we could hear the high-pitched putter of a light petrol engine. Our fishermen friends were starting for home as fast as their little craft could carry them.

"Let's see," mused Keith. "Give the six old men three hours to get home and another hour to get the news through. Old Bungo ought to be stirring his stumps some time this afternoon. He'll have us pegged for a day-submerged operator, so maybe he'll plan on flushing us tonight."

All the rest of the day *Eel* raced for the entrance of the Bungo Suido. It wasn't much of a race, as races go, for we had to calculate carefully the degree to which we could allow our battery power to be run down in prospect of the battle with Bungo Pete. We got in as close as we dared, right where the channel leading out of the Bungo Suido joined the open sea. It was dangerous because there was not enough water there to go really deep, but it was the place to be if we hoped to nail Nakame before he realized what was going on.

As the last rays of the setting sun were cut off behind the hills of Kyushu, the clouds to the east had grown until they covered nearly the entire sky. Through the periscope we could see choppy waves four to five feet in height running in from the east, and Keith and I realized that a storm was coming.

"Maybe the weather will foul up things for tonight!" Keith said.

"It can't be helped. But old Bungo might think it will give him an advantage." I had raised the periscope, was slowly swinging it in a circle. It was growing dark rapidly. "Five-eight feet!" I ordered. "Stand by

to surface!" The waves were so high that I would need the two extra feet for better visibility.

The whole ship was in a state of super-watchfulness. Keith and I had both napped, or tried to, during the afternoon, and we had instructed the crew to do likewise. Our electric torpedoes, of which we had only one full load left, had been given a specially loving last-minute check. Tonight there would be extra look-outs on, and one torpedo at each end of the ship was in readiness for instant firing. *Eel* was as ready as we could make her. I went round again with the 'scope, slowly. Something caught my eye to the north west, in the direction of Bungo Suido. Steady now—I fixed on it. "Keith. Mark this bearing!"

"Three-two eight! What is it?"

"Dunno—ship, I think." I shifted the periscope from side to side ever so slightly. It was getting so dark it was hard to see, though I had on red goggles. It was growing darker faster than my eyes were accommodating themselves. But the object—ship, it must be, was getting nearer, too.

"Bearing—Mark!"

"Three-two-eight and a quarter."

I spoke without taking my eyes away from the periscope eye piece. "Sound the general alarm!"

I could feel the bustle through the ship. Keyed up as we were, the tension mounted like steam in a boiler.

We waited. Time had slowed down. Still getting darker, and the waves bigger. The ship drew closer.

"I can see him now. Big freighter. Angle on the bow about starboard ten." I looked searchingly astern of him. Something was ringing a bell in my brain, something wrong with the set up. . . .

"Control! Five-five feet." Three more feet of periscope out. Have to watch it—that's eleven feet of it exposed. We're in good position to shoot him on this course, just as we are, if he doesn't suddenly zig. He hasn't zigged yet. This whole thing is too easy. I have a feeling we're looking right into a trap, just like that time off Palau. . . .

Palau! The Q-ship! High out of water. Short and stubby. No doubt loaded with cellulose, or balsa wood, or ping-pong balls! So that she could not sink, even with half her side blown open.

I made an observation. I could hear Buck Williams whirling the T.D.C. cranks. "Set!" he said.

"Ready to shoot, Captain!" Keith had anticipated everything. All I had to do was give the word

"We'll wait while the situation improves," I said. This smacked of something Bungo might pull. I kept looking for the destroyer, couldn't find him. But something else caught my eye, astern. Low and bulky. Not a tin can. My heart leaped to my throat—a submarine! Coming along astern of the Q ship!

"Rig for silent running! Six oh feet!" This would barely let me see over the waves. I could feel sweat on my face. "Boys, this is it! I think Bungo is on his way out to look for us!"

We watched while the high, stubby Q ship went by. The submarine swept forward. Then I saw the tin can. A dull, dark shape on the far side of the sub, running about abreast of it.

This was a cunning move. We might get the sub, but then Bungo would have us exactly where he would like to get us—submerged, in shallow water. And the Q ship was no slouch at depth charging, either. No doubt they'd work a coordinated attack on us.

"Range to sub. Mark!" Instinctively I spoke in a low key.

Oregon read it right away. "Three oh double oh!"

"We have the sub on sonar!" Keith murmured in my ear. "The bearing checks."

The sonar man's name was Stafford. An old timer. Suddenly I heard his voice. "The submarine is diving!"

So this was the plan! This was how they had got Stocker, Kane and Jim! A single ship escorted by a single destroyer, probably zigzagging radically and making slow speed so that the submerged submarine could keep up! *Walrus* and *Nerka* must have come in on the surface, fired their torpedoes at the cellulose loaded Q ship and been fired on in their turn by the submarine! A very, very slick stunt indeed! And I could imagine old Bungo watching it all in his tin can, playing the part of an unwary and incompetent escort but ready to mix it if he had to.

Now I couldn't see the submarine at all. "Do you still have him on sonar?"

"Yes, sir. Coming in like a threshing machine!" Stafford turned the sonar to loudspeaker so that I could hear it, a pounding, thrashing, gurgling noise.

"Keith," I said, speaking rapidly. "We've got to get the sub first!"

They won't expect us this close, probably won't settle down to a good sonar watch for a few minutes anyway. What range will he pass abeam?"

Buck answered. "Twelve hundred yards!"

"Good! We'll shoot him when he gets there! Figure him to be at periscope depth!"

On and on came the bearing of the Jap sub. It was a perfect sonar approach, exactly like those we had practised for years at New London and Pearl Harbour, and rarely used in the war. The only new twist—funny we had never thought of it—was that it was sub against sub.

"We'll shoot one mark eighteen electric fish," I decided. "He'll probably not even hear it, and if it doesn't work we'll try another."

"He's approaching the firing bearing, Captain!" Keith's voice.

"Shoot when he's on, Keith!"

"Fire one," said Keith. The *Eel* jerked under me.

"One fired electrically," said Quin's familiar voice.

"Torpedo is running!" said Stafford. I could hear it, a high whine, not as loud as the old steam fish.

"How much longer, Keith?"

"Thirty-three seconds!"

I spun the 'scope around. "How long now?"

"—fifteen seconds—ten—five—NOW!"

Nothing. You could hear the ticking of the stop watch in Keith's hand. Then—BOOM! A loud roar filled the conning tower. I looked on the bearing, helped by Keith's hands on the periscope handles. A froth of white water, an angry spume flung into the air, followed by a mushroom of white.

Stafford was yelping. "He's sinking!" His voice raced excitedly on, much like a football-game announcer's: "Listen to the water pour in! There's a watertight door shut—there's another one slamming—his screws are slowing down—*listen to the water pour in!* I can hear things falling inside him! He must be standing right on end, straight up and down!" We could all hear the grim cascade, the torrent of water smashing through thin bulkheads, filling compartments with shocking speed. Then another noise, crunching, rending. "He's hit bottom," announced Stafford.

"Right full rudder!" I called out. "All ahead standard! Keith, what was the enemy sub's course?"

"One-five-oh, Captain!"

"Steady on one-five-oh!"

I waited for Scott, the helmsman, to echo my commands before explaining. "Keith, what would you do if you were Bungo and you heard an explosion in the general vicinity of that Jap submarine?"

"I'd go over and take a look!"

"And what would you expect to see?"

"Well, the submerged sub would probably stick his bow out so that I'd not run over him—only this time torpedoes will come instead!" Keith's grim smile of anticipation was oddly reminiscent of Jim's.

"Very good. Only, it's not Bungo who's coming! The tin can just signalled to the Q ship, and he's started to turn round instead. So, as soon as we get turned round and squared away on the Jip course, we'll broach for the Q ship. It's so dark that I can barely see him, and if we give him our bow while he's still fairly distant he'll not be able to tell it from the Jip sub's.

"Bungo will be watching, too. He'll see us broadside."

"Yes, but he's farther away, and we're about the same colour as the Jap sub was. Besides, we want him to come our way. Tell Al to blow bow buoyancy and stick our bow out. Then flood negative and get us back down quick!"

Eel's hull shivered. I saw our bullnose come out, stay for a long instant, go back down in a smother of vented air.

This evidently satisfied the Jip, for he turned away. "They're beginning the zigzag plan," I told Keith. "We'll watch our chance and nail Bungo as soon as we can!"

For two hours *Fel* plodded along in the steadily worsening weather with the two Japanese vessels weaving back and forth in front of us. At last we decided Bungo was never coming close enough for us to shoot him, and shortly before midnight, several miles astern of Bungo and his baited trap—now short one important character—the *Eel* crept to the surface.

The instant we got there it was evident that the storm was rapidly becoming worse.

Not yet fully surfaced, the ship wallowed in the waves. Several huge combers rolled black water right over the bridge bulwarks. Keith and I, wearing hooded oilskins, were instantly drenched, and we had to hang

on firmly to the railing to keep our footing under the drunken rolling of the ship.

We were frantic for battery power. The moment we had achieved sufficient buoyancy to open the main induction safely, I gave the order and the four main engines burst out almost simultaneously. Three of them went immediately to recharging the battery, leaving the fourth for propulsion. Rapidly the life-giving amperes flowed back into the "can", and with every ten minutes or so of recharge we could count on an hour's submerged running.

Now Keith and I were able to hold a council of war. The radar still held contact with the two Japanese ships. If we could keep contact until our battery was at least partially recharged, we decided, we might be able to return to the offensive. I seized the chance to go through the ship and tell the men how matters stood. We had found out Bungo's secret, I told them, and now we were after Bungo Pete himself.

After three hours we were as ready as we would ever be. It was a lot rougher, too. A full-fledged storm was upon us, with seas fifteen to twenty feet in height, perhaps fifty feet across. We had gone back to battle stations, were heading towards the enemy, when Keith shouted up from the conning tower:

"Bridge! Bungo's gone over and joined the Q-ship! I think they've both reversed course!"

This could only mean that Captain Nakame had decided it was too rough to keep up the game, and was going to return to port. "Keep watching them, Keith," I yelled in reply.

We built up to standard speed, fourteen knots. *Eel* smashed and bucked into the seas, quivering as the big ones crashed on the bridge. It was blacker than I had ever seen it, a musty, smelly, dirty black, dank and malevolent. I could see perhaps five hundred yards. The wind tore at my binoculars, ballooned out of the back of my rain hood. The deck heaved under me, the water rising and draining away through the wooden slats.

"Bridge! Range to Bungo, four thousand! To the other one, five thousand! They're milling about—Bungo is dead ahead, the other one on our starboard bow!"

"Bridge, aye, aye!" I answered him. "Let me know the range every five hundred yards!"

We couldn't attack quite yet; not before the enemy settled down to a definite course.

"Bridge! He's calling on sonar!"

No doubt he was signalling for the submarine to surface. "Let him call!" I answered

"He's hove to, bridge! Range, three five double oh!"

This might be our chance. With Bungo trying to ruse his dead consort, his look outs might not be as alert as they should, especially in the steam. "What's the course to head for him?"

"Zero zero eight!"

"Steer zero zero eight!" I yelled to Scott through the hatch

Again the pounding, battering. Our bow would rise to one sea, smash down on the next, and go completely under water, allowing the wave to roll aft, unimpeded, till it broke in fury over the bridge. Cascades of cold ocean rolled past us.

'Look outs below.' I said. That left Al Dugin and me the only ones on the bridge, and I called him up forward.

'Range, two five double oh! Still hove to, and we can still hear him pinging!"

There was a higher shriek from the wind now, louder, too. Three seas in succession came over the bridge front, leaving us gasping. 'Range, two thousand! No change—we're opening outer doors!'

"What speed are we making?" I yelled into the bridge mike.

"Ten knots!"

Ten knots. It should be fourteen under ordinary conditions. About right for firing torpedoes in this sea, however.

"How does he bear now?"

'Dead ahead—still dead in the water!'

Less than a mile away. I couldn't see a thing.

"Fifteen hundred yards! Shall I shoot on radar bearings?"

"No!" A subconscious need to see him. Wait! Fiercely I searched the horizon. "Range one three five oh!" came on the speaker, and that was the moment I saw him at last. He was an *Akikaze* class destroyer, broadside on. He was making heavy weather of it. Water was streaming in sheets off his decks, pouring in great torrents off the fore-castle down into the well deck. I was taking all this in as I shouted into the bridge mike: "Target! Starboard ninety! T.B.T. bearing!"

I pressed the marker plunger down with my right thumb.

"Set!"

"Shoot!"

The way the command "Fire!" came out almost before I finished saying "Shoot!" was the measure of my crew.

Four times more the command "Fire!" came on the speaker, and all five torpedoes we had remaining forward went on their way. I couldn't see their wakes, for they were electric, nor could I feel the familiar jerk to the hull of the ship because of the motion and noise already going on.

And this was not the time to play the spectator. "Left full rudder!" I yelled down the hatch. *Akikaze's* look outs would see us in a moment, if they had not already. "All ahead flank!"

Before the *Eel* could feel the effect of the increased power, and before she had turned more than a few degrees, there was a flash from Bungo, and the brief scream of a shell overhead, immediately swallowed up in the storm. Then another flash--no scream this time. You certainly had to hand it to him, under the circumstances, for even getting the guns going at all.

But those were all the shots he got a chance to pump out at us, for about this time the torpedoes got there. Two certainly hit, maybe more, but two were enough, I saw the spout of water forward, and *Akikaze's* bow disappeared. The other hit under the stacks, breaking his back, lifting the centre of the ship for a moment and then dropping it, like a broken toy.

We really began to take it over the bridge then, but neither Al nor I would have cared if the waves had been periscope high. We slowed after a few minutes of it upon Keith's report that the Q ship, the only one left by now on the radar, was not chasing us, but had instead gone over to the spot where *Akikaze* had last registered an echo on our radarscope, and hove to.

The radar had also three other tiny pips, which clustered round the Q-ship when it got there. Life-boats, without question.

It would take a feat of seamanship for Bungo's consort to pick them up, though no greater than Bungo's in getting them launched in the first place. I didn't doubt that he could do it.

A wave of hopelessness swept over me when I realized that Bungo

would probably return to port, get another *Akikaze*, and go blithely back to the same old business as though nothing had happened.

If we could sink the Q ship—but how? We had only four torpedoes, all aft. And he was loaded with cellulose or something else equally floatable.

I don't remember making any conscious decision about it. There didn't seem to be any decision to make. A red haze flooded my mind, and I ordered Scott to put the rudder over once more. 'Keith,' I gritted, 'come on up here!'

For several minutes we talked out our tactics of how to get the stern tubes to bear. The wind was howling, the seas were pounding and the water poured in buckets off us, but we took no heed. We ducked what we could, ignored the rest.

We decided the Q ship would not expect us back for the moment. Doubtless he would realize that making a reload was virtually impossible unless we dived, which would take extra time. He would be entirely taken up with getting bungo aboard. If we could hit him with all four fish fairly high up on his side, the weather might well finish for us what we had started.

'Three thousand yards!' said Quinn's voice on the conning tower speaker. Keith swung to the ladder and disappeared.

'He's not under way, bridge! Target speed is zero!' Keith was back in charge down below on the speaker again.

We were coming in at standard speed once more on a course chosen to bring us in to windward. Probably the skipper of the Q ship would elect to pick up the boats to leeward.

Fifteen hundred yards, bridge! Through the flying spume and blackness I could make out the outline of a ship. He was nearly broadside to and rolling violently, but occasionally he steadied up for a moment under some vigors of the elements. These were the moments in which he would attempt to pick up bungo and his men. Probably throw them ropes, haul them aboard one at a time. A fantastic attempt, but seamen had done more fantastic things.

'One thousand yards!' This was the turning point we had decided on. We had to get close to give us the maneuvering room to turn round. They would find it hard to look into the scud upwind, we could reach one thousand yards from that direction with a fair degree of impunity.

"Right full rudder! Starboard stop! Starboard back full!" *Eel* started to swing nicely enough, got half way round before the wind really hit her. I could feel the combined force of the wind and sea as our bow rose. We stopped dead, as though we had hit a wall of mush.

"Port ahead emergency!" With both screws racing, she would have greater force to push her round.

Still no good. We gained a little, then lost it as the bow came up again. "Control!" I thumbed the button for the speaker. "Open bow buoyancy vent!" This would lessen the buoyancy of the bow, reduce the area the wind would have to work on. If we could only keep the bow from coming up at all!

"Al! Go on down to the control room. I had to cup my mouth and hold it close to his ear to make him get it all. Secure the engines and shut the main induction. Put the battery on propulsion. When I give you the word, open the forward group vents, hold them open for three seconds, and then shut them again!" I gave him a shove towards the hatch.

I grabbed the mile. Keith, I use the night periscope. Can you make out the target? If Keith could see the enemy vessel, perhaps the night scope with its big light path would do to take a shooting bearing, and I could do it from the relative safety of the conning tower.

'No luck, Skipper. Can't see a thing!'

"All right, Keith. Station somebody in the bridge hatch ready to shut it if necessary."

"Roger."

"Bridge!" Al Dugan from the control room. "Ready below!"

I pressed the bridge speaker button and yelled into it, "Control! Open and shut the forward group vents!"

Instantly white spray whirled out from between our slotted forward deck as air from the forward tanks escaped. I counted three to myself. The spray stopped at 'four.' Nothing happened at first. We heaved up as before to a passing sea, rolling far over to port, losing our few degrees of turn. Then we dropped, far down. The next sea swept across our deck as though there were no deck there.

Instinctively I had sought the leeward side, the port side. And just as the approaching wave boiled up from beneath and overwhelmed us from the top, I saw the hatch slam shut. Tons of water roared round me.

Frantically I gripped the look-out guardrail, felt my feet swept from under me. Sick despair engulfed me. I was bitterly certain that with the lack of buoyancy forward we had driven completely under. If we did not come up soon I was done for, and Bungo Pete would have won again.

And then I was out of it. The flood had rolled past and part of our bridge reappeared. Floundering in the water, I struggled aft, put my eyes to the T.B.T. It was blurred—I wiped it off with my fingers, sucking the salt from them first.

“Captain! Are you all right?”

The speaker startled me. I pushed the button, twice, as an affirmative signal.

“That did it! We’re coming round! I’ll steady up on course zero-eight zero and slow down—all we need is the bearings.” The last words were elutriated in another wave. This time I relaxed, twining my arms and legs into the T.B.T. stanchions, until it passed. Twice more the ocean buried me before my Exec announced that the ship had reached the desired heading.

I wiped off the T.B.T. lenses again, sighted through.

“Ready, Keith! Single shots! Don’t shoot unless I’m holding down the button!” This was in case I might be temporarily unable to aim. I turned the T.B.T. slowly, centred the cross hair on the Q-ship’s wildly tossing stack.

“Range, nine hundred! Can you see our stern, Captain? Give us a bearing of the stern light!”

I sighted on to the stern light, which Keith and I had long ago designated as the bore sight target for the after T.B.T., just as the centre of the bullnose was for the forward one. It was a good precaution and took only a second. I pushed the button on top of the right handle of the T.B.T. twice.

“Okay! Give us the target for the first fish!” Another deluge of water, not so long this time. I hardly felt it, got the T.B.T. on as soon as my head came out, held the button down.

“One’s away!” I let go the button. We’d watch the fish.

BLAM! A stunning flash of light, followed by an explosion!

“Hit, Skipper!” The speaker—how could Keith have heard, with the ship **battered** down as it was? Then the obvious explanation: the sound

had travelled four times as fast through the water as it could through air

The hit had been forward of the stack. I put the T B T cross hair mid way between the stack and the stern, thumbed the button again

"Two's away!" This time I was under the water when the explosion came in. My eardrums were ringing when I came out again, just in time to see the column of water falling on the ridiculous fore shortened stern. One forward and one aft. Not bad. I timed the third one at the stack once more

"Three's away!" The wait again. To be reasonably sure of destroying the Q ship, we had to hit her with three torpedoes anyway, preferably all four

A quick flash of orange—gunfire! He had unlumbered one of his broadside guns, was shooting at us! I didn't even hear the passage of the shell, wouldn't have cared if I had. This was the pivot, this the moment of revenge. This was getting even for the *Walrus* and for Jim, Hugh, Stocker and the rest who gave their lives for their country. And for Hurry Kinc, and Laura, and the other people whose lives had been shattered by this foul war

WHRRUMP!

Number Three went home, right under the stack. The water spout came up—I thought the motion of the stack looked strange, different from the crazily tossing mists. When the white water deluged down, the smokestack drunkenly, slowly, toppled forward. And there was something a bit different in the way he rolled. Slower, further over each time a sea tossed him

The fourth fish. Same place—where the stack had been. Hold the button down. "Four's away, Skipper!"

The masts had not come back from the last roll, were still leaning towards me. There they go—slowly up again—no, just a wave rolling past. Down came the two masts lower than ever towards the black, eager water, the grey slash of deck now clearly visible. Our fourth torpedo smashed squarely into it

Supplicatingly, as if tired of conflict and travail, the mists lay on the water. The hull separated into two parts, and I saw the bottoms of both, intermittently, as the seas raced upon them

"Radar shows he's sinking, Skipper! We're blowing up now!" The *Eel* rose quickly. In a moment, it seemed, we were fully surfaced, and

Keith and Al joined me. I pointed silently astern. We could barely make out the low-lying hulks of the two halves of our antagonist. Every succeeding wave which tore down upon them buried them, and finally we could see only one.

"What's the range, conn?" I called into the after speaker.

"Eight hundred yards, sir!" We had been drifting backward during the whole attack. "We still have four pips on the radar!"

At this moment the second hulk failed to reappear. A long instant we watched for it to rise into sight. "One pip's gone, bridge! Three left, coming in and out!"

"He doesn't know what he's talking about!" muttered Al.

"No, he's right. Those are the life-boats!" Keith's voice was matter-of-fact.

Of course the life-boats. And Bungo was just the man to weather the storm in them, too. Less than fifty miles from shore, he'd be back in business within a week!

"Go below, both of you!" I spoke roughly, an unaccustomed dryness in my mouth.

"Why, what's the matter . . .?" One look and Keith shut up. I waved him impatiently to the hatch.

"Right full rudder! All ahead flank!"

This time there was no trouble turning, with the wind helping. And then it was pushing us, the seas alternately lifting first stern, then bow, as they steam-rollered by. Every time our bullnose lifted clear of the water it must have heaved twenty feet into the air before the sea caught up with it.

I pushed the forward speaker button. "Radar! What's the bearing and distance to the nearest pip?"

"Three-zero-zero, one thousand!"

"Keep the ranges coming!" I shouted. Then to the helmsman: "Steer three-zero-zero!"

We came right a little.

After a bit I could see it in the breaking dawn, a little boat with oars out, tossed up against the sky.

"Steer three-zero-five!" That put it right ahead. Now they saw us, lay on their oars, looking. A row of faces staring out of hunched-over bodies. They had had a rough night, and a rougher morning.

I gritted my teeth "Steer three zero four!"

They suddenly realized their danger. Oars moved jerkily, frantically. They had been in the "no quarter" business too. We were right on them, towered above them, our huge bow rised high on a wave, poised in deadly, smashing promise, pitiless. I looked the steersman right in the eye as he stood at his oar, dead ahead and far below. The wave passed. Our bow dropped like a guillotine.

The boat never even came up. One black round head swam by, looking up with horror-filled eyes. I steelled myself. This was how they had looked in *Wabius* when the unexpected torpedo hit them. This was the look Jim had given to Rubinofski that Knobby Robertson had exchanged with Dave.

Push the button again. Go on with it! This is what you came out here to do! You have to kill bungle and all of his crew! Rid it! Range and bearing to the nearest pip!

"North! Six hundred!"

I could hardly talk. "Steer north!" I croaked.

"Skipper, may I come on the bridge? Keith."

"No! Stay below! What's the bearing now?"

"Three five nine!"

"Steer three five nine!" I could catch the note of disbelief in the helmsman's voice as he acknowledged.

The rules of discipline held firm, however, and the lubber's line settled one degree left of due north.

I aimed the juggernaut exactly at the centre of the second boat. As before, they watched it first in surprise, suddenly in terror, when they knew. They rowed better than the others, started to edge out of our way.

I was ready.

"Left ten degrees rudder! We curved left a little. Amidships!"

We smote it amidships with our bullnose, rising, smashed in the side, tumbled it over, rolled it down and out of sight under our keel. Some sticks of kindling came up in our wake.

"Radar, give me the bearing and range to the last pip!"

No answer.

"Radar! Acknowledge!"

The voice was weak, hesitant. "Nothing on the radar, sir!"

"You're lying!"

"Zero-six-three, one thousand!" Keith's voice, strong and dominant.

This time it was right into the teeth of the storm; I had to duck periodically as the seas came aboard and broke yards over my head. The boat came into sight at about eight hundred yards, a tiny dot in the water. Rolling, pitching, staggering, we headed for it. Five hundred yards. One hundred yards.

Zing! A rifle bullet *Zing! Zing!* A sharp rap, as one hit the armoured side plating at the front of the bridge, and the whine of a ricochet. Somebody was still fighting. The boat turned bow on as the *Eel* approached, making the most difficult target it could. I aimed right for its stern. Our bullnose rose above it with a short, quick, choppy movement, just grazed it on descending.

"Left full rudder!" I ducked as I gave the order, a split second before a bullet smacked in the T.B.T. binoculars.

Peering over the bridge cowling, I saw our bow alongside, pushing the boat as we began to swing to port. They were tending us off with their oars. I ducked again.

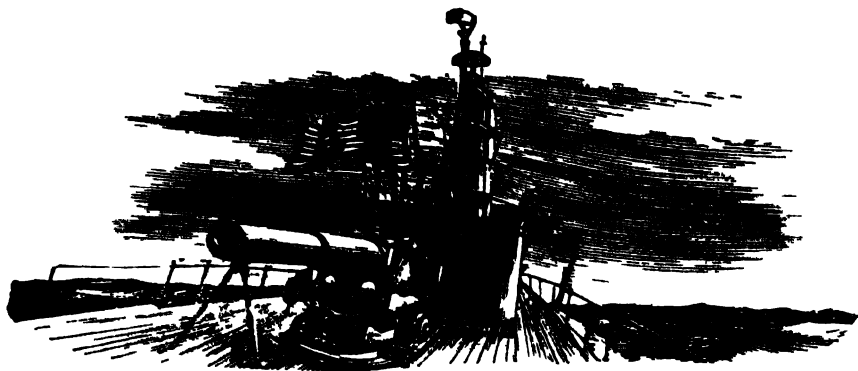
"Shift your rudder to full right!" Scott had not yet reached full left, reversed himself immediately. I caught a quick glimpse of the man with the rifle, a short, fat fellow with an impassive moonface standing in the stern, alongside the steering oarsman. We came round in a circle. This time there was no avoiding us. The rifle pocked the front of our bridge before we hit.

Our stem knifed through the fragile sides as if they were match sticks, split the boat in half. A final shot cracked overhead. I saw the gun flying out into the water at the instant of collision. There were bodies in the water on both sides as we hurried past. One shook his fists at us, his mouth open in a scream no one could have heard. He skidded down our rounded belly, vanished aft spinning in our wake.

"All ahead one third!" I yelled down the hatch. Then in the speaker, "Radar! Are there any more pips on the 'scope?"

Keith answered, as before. "Nothing on the radar, Captain!"

My hands were trembling. They wouldn't stop. My knees too. I felt as if I were about to fall over. I wrapped both arms around the shattered T.B.T., and deep, racking sobs came boiling up out of the hard, twisted knot that was my belly.



CHAPTER 10

K EITH WROTE the message to ComSubPac for me. I couldn't bring myself to think about it. We sent:

FOR COMSUBPAC X SPECIAL MISSION SUCCESSFUL X SCRATCH BUNGO
PERMANENTLY RPT PERMANENTLY X ALL TORPEDOES EXPENDED X EEI
SENDS TO COMSUBPAC

The answer which came in the next night was hardly the one we expected. Instead of sending us back to Pearl or Midway for a new load of torpedoes, it directed us to proceed immediately to Guam, there to stand by for lifeguard duty during a series of air strikes.

The news was greeted with a chorus of dismay from the crew, who had been eagerly anticipating an early return from patrol. Their reaction to the final combat, during which we had deliberately ridden down a lot of unresisting shipwrecked Japanese to get Captain Nakame, was curious. At first I sensed disbelief, disapproval. Eyes looked at me thoughtfully. The men fell silent when I came near. When I left I could hear conversation resumed, low-voiced, uneasy. They would obey me, do my bidding quickly—more quickly than ever—but they would never think of me as other than a man who had killed my fellow men in cold blood—a murderer. War or not, I had gone beyond the permissible limit.

As for myself, all the way south to Guam the life-boats haunted me. I couldn't sleep, tossed fitfully, always the tortured faces in front of me, screaming when we drove past them the last time. I dreamed that I could understand them, and I strained to catch their last words. Always they cast some foul curse upon me and the *Eel*, prophesying doom, swearing revenge.

I had done what I had set out to do; I had destroyed Bungo Pete, and he deserved destroying, by our lights, for he had destroyed many of our fellows. But to do it I had crossed the boundary dividing the decent from the indecent; the thin line between the moral and immoral. I was a pariah, despised, an outcast. I would never be able to look a decent man in the face again. I took to spending long solitary hours on the bridge, looking at the water rushing past.

Keith tried to snap me out of it. "Don't take it that way," he'd say. "We all did it together. I'd have done the same thing! We had to do it—Bungo would have been back there within a couple of weeks. Nobody's blaming you."

But it didn't do any good. I hardly glanced at the operation dispatches, made Keith do all the planning. Vaguely I knew that we were supposed to stay on the surface during the air strikes, and remain in a certain spot, where crippled planes could find us. The aviators would ditch their planes or parachute out as close to us as they could get, and it was up to us to get them aboard. We were to remain there three days.

On the morning of the first day, flying our biggest American flag, we were on station. The dispatches had said that the Japs would have far too much to do to bother about a surfaced submarine thirty miles south of Guam, but it felt a bit risky at first. Several flights of U.S. carrier-based planes flew overhead en route to make their attack. We were too far away to see the actual bombing runs but we did see some dog-fights. As the dispatches had forecast, none of the Jap planes took a second look at us.

We got no business the first day. As the second day wore on, it appeared likely that we'd have no business either. Our forces greatly outnumbered the enemy, and they were having a picnic. Mid-afternoon they started back, some flying low over us and wagging their wings.

It was about this time that the bridge speaker blared forth: "Bridge! Radio thinks they can hear a distress message!"

"I'll go down and see, Skipper!" Keith slipped down the hatch. In a few minutes his voice came up: "There are three men in the plane, sir, all wounded. They're going to try to ditch near us. I'm telling the rescue party to stand by."

Low to the water, just appearing over the north-east horizon, a plane appeared, flying one wing low. It approached, circled us once. I could see holes in the fuselage and wing. The plane went off in the distance, turned, began to drop slowly. The pilot did a nice job of letting his craft down into the water. It struck with a tremendous splash, however, bounced into the air, bellyfopped back into the water and skidded to a stop.

Before it stopped moving we were heading for it, and several minutes later we drew up alongside the two yellow life rafts that had miraculously appeared before the plane sank. Our rescue party of six men, under Buck Williams, was on deck, looking very businesslike as they waited for the ship to approach closer to the rafts. One of them, Scott, held a heaving line coiled loosely in his hand.

There was about fifteen yards' distance to the rafts when our headway petered out. We were anxious, of course, not to come up too fast and upset them with our wash. Scott took a few tentative swings with the heaving line, wound up, and let fly. The heave was a beauty and the weighted end landed just beyond the nearest raft, trailing the line across it.

Through my binoculars I could see the single flier in the smaller of the two rubber boats grasp the line and painfully haul up on it. It was evident that it hurt him to move. I cupped my hands, yelled at him: "Make it fast! We'll pull you in!"

I could see him pass the end of the line through one of the flaps of the boat and take a quick turn. "Okay, Scott. Pull them in easy," I called. Three or four sailors grabbed the rope and in a few seconds the first life raft was alongside, the other following at the end of a short line. Several men reached down to help the fliers aboard, but they were beyond doing anything more to help themselves. Feebly, the man in the nearest life raft reached up, finally lay back, and shook his head with a grimace.

"Pull them up forward to the sea ladder," Keith called to Williams. Buckley and Scott ran forward, lined the rubber boats up with the

foot holes cut in the side of our superstructure, knotted the heaving line round one of the forward cleats. Then as they ran back to where Oregon was just beginning to lower himself over the side, a look-out on the platform above me shouted a frantic warning.

"PLANE! PLANE!"

Keith and I looked over our shoulders instinctively. It was there, all right, a big four-engine patrol boat. It was coming right at us, the four big propellers glinting in the sun.

"Clear the decks!" I yelled. I reached down, pulled the toggle handle—our air-operated foghorn blasted its warning. Then, "Clear the bridge!" Keith and the look-outs dashed below. The men down on deck came racing up. Oregon almost flew up from his barely over-the-side perch. I sounded the diving alarm. When Williams, the last man, ran past me, he called. "They'll be all right in the rafts—I told them we'd come right back up for them."

"You bet!" I thought, "and we'll surface under the plane and smash it to bits if it lands to capture them!"

I gave a last look round. The plane was a fair distance away; we'd get down in time. But as I looked forward my heart froze. The heaving line was still fast to the starboard forward cleat, and our bow was already dipping towards the sea! Within seconds we would be submerged, dragging the line, and the two rubber boats, with us. The three fliers would be dumped into the water. In their condition, survival for even a few minutes was an impossibility.

It could not have taken me more than a second to assess the grim results of my carelessness in allowing the line to be made fast to the ship, Buck's in not cutting it free during the seconds he had waited for Oregon, down on deck.

Keith's head was framed in the hatch. "Skipper!" he shouted.

"Take charge, Keith!" I yelled. I leaped down to the deck, raced forward. The bow had just begun to dip, water barely sliding over the deck. Furiously I ripped at the heaving line. It was made fast in a hitch; no loop to pull to release it. I cursed aloud. No knife in my pocket! The cleat was well under now, my hands buried inches—a foot—under.

Frantically I pulled. My feet slipped, and I plunged into the cool water, sitting down facing aft, legs on either side of the cleat. This kept me from slipping farther, but the water rose rapidly and I concentrated



on the now-soaked knot while I held my breath against the water and tried to hold myself against the rising panic. *Take it easy, take your time; take it easy, take your time!* I said it over and over to myself, as the rush of the water bent me over the cleat. My ears began to hurt. We must be pretty deep now. I pulled again, got my fingers under some part of the knot, yanked with both hands and superhuman force, felt the line come free and slip swiftly from my hands.

Painfully I braced back against the rush of water. I got both hands against the cleat round which my legs were spread-eagled, pushed with everything I had. There was a terrific pain in my groin, paralysing, digging deep into my inside.

I must have been out for a moment, for the next thing I remember was bright sunlight and the most exquisite, excruciating pain I have ever felt. I was floating in the water, my head pillowed on the inflated edge of one of the rafts. Someone was holding my arm, and a voice was saying something I couldn't understand. I shook my head, looked up. A deep gash of agony made me double up again.

Then the spasm passed, leaving a throbbing ache in my abdomen, and I raised my head. "Hang on!" It was the flier who had caught the heaving line. He was holding on to my arm like grim death, his face contorted. He had pulled me, somehow, in spite of his condition, to the raft and held me there while I regained my senses. Gasping with pain, I managed to struggle aboard, tumbled headfirst into the soft rubber bottom of the raft.

"Easy, fella, that's mah busted leg!"



the flier said. I twisted round carefully. "Are you the skipper," he asked. I nodded.

A shadow flitted across us. I looked up. "There's the guy that brought us all the trouble," the flier said. It was the Jap flying boat, all right, flying low to take a good look. It circled, then roared off to the north and out of sight.

My ache subsided a little, and I straightened up gratefully. "The sub will stick around to get us," I told him "They'll surface as soon as the plane goes out of sight for good."

"Hope that's pretty soon. My men are badly hit."

In the other boat the two men were lying quietly, only their heads showing. The water, which had seemed virtually flat calm from *Eel's* bridge, sea-sawed the helpless rafts uneasily. I tried to sit up straighter, to disregard the discomfort it brought. "Can you see the periscope of my sub?"

"Nope. Never seen one. What does it look like?"

"Like a broom handle, floating straight up and down," I said.

Presently he nudged me. "There's a broom handle." I looked where he indicated, saw the *Eel's* periscope approaching. I waved to show Keith that I was all right. The periscope began to rise higher, Keith was surfacing, or about to surface.

"There's that Jap again!" To the north, sure enough, the plane was coming back. Steeling myself against the waves of pain, I stood up, braced myself on the flier's shoulders, pointed determinedly down several times, then pointed to the north. I saw the quick glint of the eye piece as it turned in that direction and I sat down again, relieved. Keith would have the word now.

For about an hour *Eel's* periscope cruised warily about, and for an hour the Jap plane flew back and forth, flying over the horizon, coming back almost overhead, then flying out of sight again.

"How long can this kind of a plane stay in the air?" I asked.

"I sure don't know. A mighty long time, but it depends on when they took off." He grinned. "Now let me ask you a foolish one. How soon do you figure you can come up and get us aboard? I'm getting worried about those two fellas in the other boat."

I shook my head dolefully. "I'm beginning to think those Japs know what's happened down here, and they're flying back and forth, expect-

ing the sub to come back." An idea struck me. "Let's time the flights. Have you got a watch? Mine's stopped."

At my instruction he timed the flights from just before the plane went out of sight until it arrived back in our vicinity. I busied myself hauling in the heaving line and inspecting it carefully. I fashioned a slipknot in the unweighted end, tested the knot which fastened it to our raft. I also shortened the line to the other raft, bringing it tight up against ours. The preparations, in our cramped situation, took quite a while. "How long?" I finally asked as the flying boat swung round at the completion of its second circuit.

"Ten minutes this last time, eight the time before."

"Good. Maybe eight minutes will be long enough." Obviously the Jap aviators were playing the cat and mouse game, hoping Keith would swallow the bait and try to rescue us. *Eel*, in the meantime, was cruising about with only the minimum of periscope showing. When the Japs came close, Keith would dunk the 'scope until after the plane had started away on another leg.

The flying boat was well on its way now. I motioned to Keith to come alongside. Slowly the periscope began to approach.

He was a little too cautious, no doubt for fear of hitting the rafts and dumping us all, but I was ready for that. Carrying the noose end of the heaving line, I slipped over the side and struggled through the water into his path. The 'scope came at me surprisingly fast—three knots or so is mighty fast to a man in the water—but I managed to grab hold and slip the loop over the end of it. As the periscope took it away I slid down the tautening line until I reached the raft again and remained there in the water, my arm looped over the thin, tight cord. The other periscope came up, turned, studied the first one, rising and descending slowly to inspect the line where I had made it fast, then steadied on us. I made a staying motion with my hand, looked to the plane. I watched it go over the horizon, waited a deliberate twenty seconds, made a violent upward motion.

Beneath us I could see the long hull of the *Eel*—we were dragging along somewhere over the five-inch gun. Nothing happened for a long time. I knew Keith would not delay, finally realized the deck was nearer. Suddenly the periscope with the line round its neck disappeared. Keith had lowered it.

RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP

"Here they come!" I said. *Eel* came up with a rush. Water cascaded off her. It was a good thing Keith had had the foresight to lower the periscope to which I had tied the heaving line; otherwise its length would have been insufficient to reach the deck, and we should have taken a nasty tumble. Hanging on to it as I was, I was able to touch the deck first with my feet and, gritting my teeth, guide the landing of the two rafts in the tumultuous rush of water.

And then there was the bang of the hatch on the bridge, and Keith's voice yelling. Eager hands grabbed all four of us, hustled us to the bridge, pitched us down into the conning tower, feet first or head first, whichever end got there first. Finally Keith and Buck Williams were in, and the hatch was slammed shut. Instantly the vents went open, and *Eel* began to slip beneath the waves.

"Buck," Keith said urgently, "did you get the line cut?"

"You bet I did, this time, and I punctured both rafts, too!"

"Al! Take her right down! They're coming in as fast as they can! Rig for depth charge!"

I had to admire Keith's command of the situation. He paid no attention to me or anyone of the raft party, and was strictly business, anxiously watching the conning-tower depth gauge.

"Seventy-five feet," he finally said. "I guess we're clear!"

WHAM! Good and close, too. The *Eel's* tough hide rang for several seconds, and dust raised here and there. Keith crossed to the phone, picked it up.

"All compartments report," he said. He listened for a moment, hung it up. "No damage, Skipper," he said.

Then he faced me squarely, his eyes two deep wells of concern. "God, Skipper! What a helluvan experience! How do you feel? Do you need anything?"

I was dripping wet and ached all over, but I had not felt so good for a week. There was nothing more I needed.

So THAT'S about the whole story. We made three more patrols in the *Eel* and sank several more Japanese ships—and then the war ended and I had to fly here to Washington for a round of ceremonies I had never expected would happen to me. Keith is still with the ship in Pearl, and the Admiral expects me back next week when he pins the Navy Cross

on him. Everybody seems to have gone wild over our rescue of the three fliers. I've sat through half a dozen speeches about it, and there's a stack of mail in the same vein. Personally, I could tell about one thing that was an awful lot tougher, but that's all in the past and best forgotten now.

I had only an hour in San Francisco waiting for my plane, so I had to call Hurry, instead of going to see her.

"Rich!" she breathed. "Where are you? Can you come over?"

"Wish I could, but my plane is supposed to take off right away."

"I'm so proud of you, Rich. It's just wonderful about your getting the Medal of Honour."

"I've got to go to New London for a little while . . ."

"Good!" she exclaimed. "Maybe you can get over to New Haven and see I . . ."

Maybe Hurry instinctively knew what I wanted to talk about. "How is Laura?" I asked.

"Oh, she's fine. You know, she was out here for a month just a little while ago. She's more beautiful than ever. She took it pretty hard about Jim, though, especially right after he was reported missing and some of those stories started to drift back. He should have written her more often."

"I don't think anybody was able to write as often as he would have liked," I began, but Hurry interrupted me. She was talking rapidly, as though racing against time.

"No, Rich. Listen to me. Jim's been gone a year now, and I know it's dreadful to speak ill of the dead, but Laura was miserable. His letters kept getting fewer and shorter and more distant. And then there were those rumours about his playing about. Rich, why don't you go and see her while you're in New London?"

"You know how she feels about me, Hurry," I said.

Hurry's voice took on a tinge of friendly exasperation. "Rich, what do you think I'm trying to tell you? Jim wrote her once that he had finally understood how right you were about that qualification business. Then when she stayed with me we had plenty of time to talk. I told Laura a lot of things that I had learned from Stocker, about how it was to be a skipper of a Navy ship, especially skipper of a submarine. . . ."

The loudspeaker near the phone blared the warning for my plane.

Hurry must have heard it too, for she stuttered out the last words in her rush to get them all in.

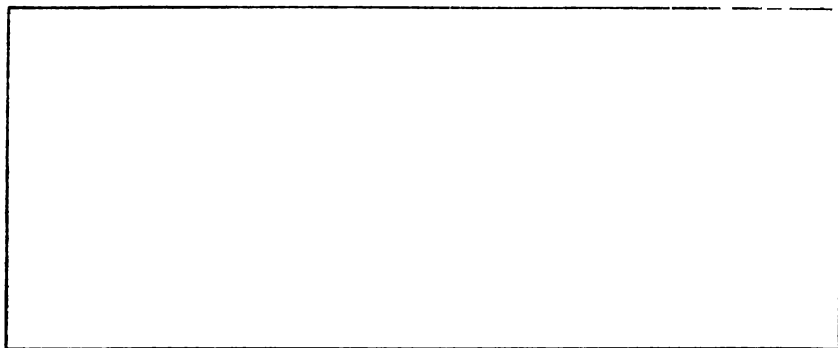
"Promise me you will go and see her, Rich. I've always wished she had met you before Jim. She was fascinated by Jim—but you're the man she needs. And she's always liked you, Rich. Even when she seemed not to, she really did."

"Well, I" The warning call came again.

"Go on! Please! Don't just stand there and argue. You've got to go and at least see her." Hurry hung up.

I HAD to run to catch the plane, but the call was worth it. Now I've got just an hour and a half to get my suitcase and climb aboard the train for New Haven. There'll be plenty of time for New London later. Right now I want to see Laura, just as soon as I can. The war is over. She needs me and I need her.

For once there'll be plenty of time for everything.





Commander Edward L. Beach

COMMANDER Edward L. Beach is an American naval officer whose wartime service provided, at first hand, the material for many of the exciting incidents in *Run Silent, Run Deep*. He took part in ten patrols in the submarine *Trigger*, which sank or damaged thirty six enemy war and merchant ships. He was executive officer on the *Tirante* when she entered a Japanese harbour at night, sinking at anchor an enemy ammunition ship and two destroyers. The submarine *Piper*, of which he was commanding officer, had the honour of being the last to return from patrol after the war ended.

Beach was born in New York in 1918, and graduated from the Naval Academy. After considerable sea duty, he was posted to the U.S. Submarine School in 1941. He graduated with the highest standing in his group.

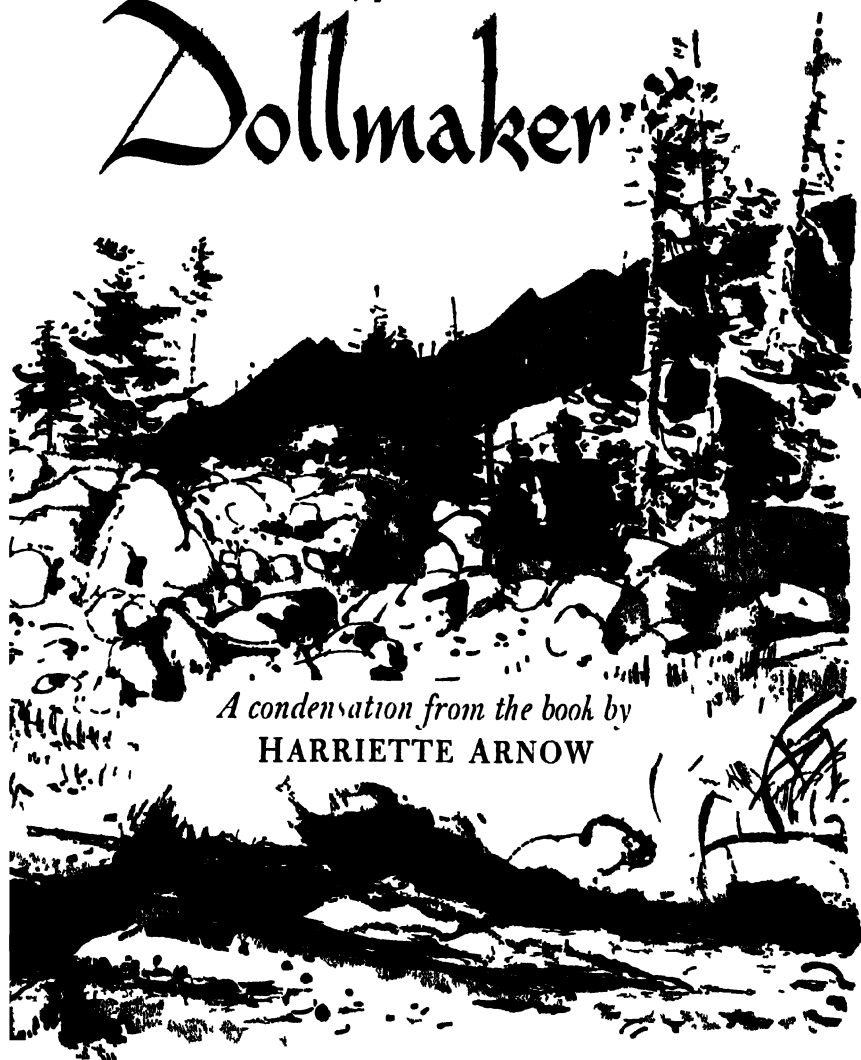
Portions of Commander Beach's first book, *Submarine!*, have appeared in *The Reader's Digest*. Married and the father of two boys and a girl, he is now Naval Aide to President Eisenhower.

THE DOLLMAKER



Illustrations by Austin Sprague

The Dollmaker



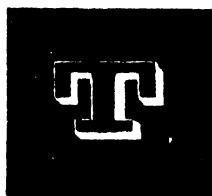
A condensation from the book by
HARRIETTE ARNOW

The Dollmaker'' is published by William Heinemann, London

The Dollmaker Harriette Arnow's tribute to the indestructibility of a simple mountain woman is a most distinguished novel. The opening section of the book, presented here, introduces the big raw-boned heroine as she faces one of the many crises in her life—the desperate illness of her youngest child. Poor in everything except courage and endurance, Gertie Nevels is unforgettable as she works to save her little son's life. Her struggle, and what she learns from it about human nature, are rich in the elements of sadness, triumph and surprise.

‘There is a haunting attraction in this absorbing novel’
—*The Star*

“Hard to put down and even harder to forget”
—*Liverpool Daily Post*



THE MULE'S shoes on the rocks up the hill and his heavy breathing had shut out all sound so that for a long while it seemed she had heard nothing, and Amos lay too still, not clawing at the blanket as when they had started. They reached the ridge top where the road ran through scrub pine in sand, and while the mule's shoes were soft on the thick needles she bent her head low over the long bundle across the saddle horn, listening. Almost at once she straightened, and lashed the already sweat soaked mule hard in the flanks until he broke into an awkward gallop. "I know you're tired, Dock, but it ain't much furdur," she said in a low tight voice.

She rode on in silence, her big body hunched protectingly over the bundle. Now and then she glanced worriedly up at the sky, greying into the thick twilight of a rainy afternoon in October; but mostly her eyes, large, like the rest of her, were fixed straight ahead.

They reached the silent highway, stretching empty between the pines, and the mule stopped, his ears flicking slowly back and forth as he considered the asphalt road. She kicked him again, explaining, "It's a road fer automobiles; we'll have to ride it to stop a car, then you can git back home."

The mule danced stiff-leggedly back into the familiar sanctuary of soft ground and pine trees. "No," the woman said, gripping his thin flanks with her long thighs, "no, you've got to git out in th middle so's

we can stop a car a-goen towards th doctor's. You've got to." She kicked him again and he tried one weary, half-hearted bucking jump; but the woman only settled herself in the saddle and gripped with her drawn-up knees and her heels. Her voice was half pleading, half scolding: "No, Dock, you know you cain't buck me off, not even if you was fresh—an you ain't. So git on."

The great raw-boned mule argued with his ears and shook the bridle rein, but soon accepted the fact that the woman was master still. He galloped down the middle of the asphalt that followed a high and narrow ridge and seemed at times like a road in the sky, the nothingness of fog-filled valleys far below on either side.

The road was beginning to curve sharply and down so that little of it could be seen in either direction. The woman's head was bent again, listening above the bundle, when the mule plunged wildly towards the pines. She jerked hard on the bridle, so fiercely that he whirled about, reared, came down, then took a hard, stiff-legged jump that landed him for an instant crosswise in the road.

The roar of a car's coming grew louder. Terrified by the strange sound and the unfamiliar road, the mule fought back towards the pines. The woman gripped with her legs, pulled with her hand, so that they seemed to do some wild but well-rehearsed dance, round and round in the road.

Yellow fog lights, pale in the grey mists, washed over them, shone on one of the woman's shoes, a man's shoe with cleats holding leather thongs, pressed hard against the mule's lifted body. It seemed a long time she sat so, the mule on his hind legs, the car lights washing over her, the child in the crook of her arm while she talked to the mule in a low urgent voice: "Don't be afeared, Dock. They'll stop. We'll make em stop. They dasn't take these downhill curves too fast."

There was a loud, insistent honking; brakes squealed and rubber squeaked while the fingers of light swept away from the woman and out into the fog above the valley. Then, as the car skidded, the lights crossed the woman again, went into the pines on the other side of the road, swept back, as the car, now only a few feet behind her, came out of its skid. The woman's voice was low, pressed down by some terrible urgency as she begged the mule under the screaming of the horn, "Crosswise, crosswise; it'll git by us on t'other side."

She jerked, kicked the mule, until he, already crazed with fright,

jumped almost directly in front of the car, forcing it to swerve again, this time so sharply that it went completely off the road. It ploughed part way into a thicket of little pines, then stopped on the narrow sandy shoulder above the bluff edge. The woman looked once at the car, then down past the trembling mule's ears, there was only fog, thickened in splotches, greenish above a pasture field, brownish over the corn far down in the valley.

"You done good, real good," she whispered to the mule. Then all in one swift motion she swung one long leg over the mule's back, looped the bridle over the saddle horn, turned the dazed mule southward, slapping him on the shoulder. "Git," she said. She did not look after him as he leaped away, broken ribbons of foam flying down his chin, and blood oozing from a cut on his left hind leg where the car had grazed him.

She hurried a few steps along the bluff edge to the car as if afraid it would be off again. The front door opened slowly, cautiously, and a soldier, his head almost to her chin, got out. He stared up at her and did not answer when she begged all in a breath. "I've got to have a lift. My little boy he's . . ."

The soldier was no longer looking at her. His eyes were fixed on the poplar tops rising above the bluff edge. Then slowly taking his glance away he reached for the handle of the back door, but dropped his hand when he saw that the window in the door was opening.

The woman turned to the window and watched impatiently while first a hard and shiny soldier's cap rose above it, then a man's face, straight and neat and hard appearing as the cap, but flushed with surprise and anger. The mouth was hardly showing before it spoke, quickly, but with a flat, careful pronunciation of the words "You realize you've run me off the road. If you can't manage a horse, don't ride one on the highway. Don't you know there's a war and this road carries . . ."

"I know there's a war," the woman said, reaching for the door handle. "That's why the doctor closest home is gone. It was a mule," she went on. "I managed him. I had to make you stop. I've got to git my little boy to a doctor—quick." She had one foot inside the door, the child held now in her two hands as she prepared to lay him on the seat.

The man, plainly irritated because he had neglected to hold the door shut, continued to sit by it, barring her way. In toneless, unruffled words he said, "You must use other means of getting your child to the doctor."

He reached swiftly, jerked the door so that she, bent as she was, and with the heavy bundle in her two hands, staggered. Her head flopped downward to his knees, but she righted herself and kept one foot in the door.

"If my business were not so urgent," he said, not taking his hand from the door, "I would have you arrested for sabotage. I travel from"—he hesitated—"an important place on urgent business." The voice sharpened a little as he turned from her to the driver and said, "Get back into the car and drive on." He looked once at the bundle where one small sunburned but blue-nailed hand waved aimlessly out of the blanket folds. Then, letting the door swing wide, he jerked it swiftly so that it struck against the woman's back.

She straightened, put the hand under the blanket, but continued to stand between door and car. "I'm sorry you're th Army; from Oak Ridge, I reckon, but I'd a stopped you enyhow." Her voice was quiet. "You can shoot me now er give me an this youngen a lift to th closest doctor." And even in the man's work shoes, the long and shapeless coat, green-tinged with age, open, giving glimpses of a blue apron faded in strange squares, she held herself proudly, saying: "You want my name; I'm Gertie Nevels from Ballew, Kentucky. Now, let me lay my little boy down. You cain't go. . . ."

The officer's voice shrilled a little as he said to the young soldier who had stood stiff and silent, staring at the woman: "Get in and drive on."

The soldier took his eyes from the blanket, still now. He saluted and said, "Yes, sir," but continued to stand against the car.

"Back up on the road and drive on," the officer repeated, his face reddening.

"Yes, sir," the other said again, unmoving.

The woman looked at the officer. "You want him to go over th bluff?" And her voice was weary to breaking, like an overwrought mother speaking to a stubborn child.

The older man for the first time looked past the woman and realized that what he had taken for a continuation of the brush and scrub pine was the tops of tall-growing trees below a bluff. He began a rapid edging along the seat to the opposite door. It was only when he was out of the car and a few feet from the bluff edge that he was able to speak and command the soldier to back out.

The woman, as soon as the officer moved, had laid the child on the seat. Then she stood watching the driver, frowning as he raced the motor until the smoking rear wheels dug great holes in the sandy shoulder. "That'll do no good," she said, her voice lifted above the roaring motor. "Have you got a axe?"

The soldier shook his head, smiling a little. The woman picked up a large sandrock, dropped it behind one of the deeply sunken rear wheels. "Have you got a jack?" she asked the officer. "You could heist it up with a jack, git rocks under them wheels, an back up on th road."

"Take your child out of the car and get on," he said. "We may be stuck here until I can get a tow truck. You'll be arrested."

She glanced at him briefly; then, drawing the bottom of her apron into one hand to form a kind of sack, she began gathering rocks hastily with the other hand.

The young soldier had by now got out of the car again and stood by it, his back and shoulders very straight. The officer looked at him and his voice was shrill, akin to an angry woman's. "Hatcher, you're not on the parade ground. Get out the jack." He frowned a moment as if loath to repeat the woman's suggestion.

"Yes, hurry, please," the woman begged, not pausing in her rock gathering, but looking towards the child on the back seat. It had struggled until the blanket had fallen away from its head, showing dark hair above a face that shone yellowish-white, contorted with some terrible effort to cry or vomit or speak.

Gertie hurried up with an apronful of rocks, dumped them, then went at her darting, stooping run along the bluff edge searching for more. The young soldier got out the jack and set it in the sandy mud under the rear bumper.

"That's no good," the woman said, coming up with more rocks; and with one hand still holding the apron she picked up the jack, put a flat rock where it had been, reset it, gave it a quick, critical glance. "That'll hold now," she said. She dumped her rocks by the wheel, but continued to squat, studying now the pines caught under the front of the car.

The officer stood at the edge of the asphalt, silent. Often he glanced at his wrist watch, but mostly his frowning glance was fixed on the car and the woman. She straightened now and in her hand was a long knife, bright, thin, sharply pointed. The man, watching, took a quick

step backward while his hand went to his pistol. Without looking at either man, the woman knelt by the front of the car and, reaching far under with the knife, slashed rapidly at the entangled pine saplings while with the other hand she jerked them free and flung them behind her.

Finished, she went quickly along the bluff edge by the car, her glance searching through the window towards the child, still now, with the hand of one down-hanging arm brushing the floor. She watched only an instant and did not bend to listen, for clearly in the silence came the child's short choking gasps. She hurried on round the back of the car, and bent above the soldier, only now getting the jack into working position. "Hurry," she begged. "Please, cain't you hurry—he's a choken so." And in her haste to get a wheel on solid rock she began clawing at the muddy earth with her hands, pushing rocks under the tyre as it slowly lifted.

In a moment the officer called, "That's enough; try backing out now."

Some of the woman's need for haste seemed to have entered the soldier. He straightened, glanced quickly towards the child and hurried into the driver's seat. The woman ran to the back wheel that had dug such a rut in the mud, and watched anxiously while the driver started the motor, raced it and backed an inch or so. The car stopped, the motor roaring, the wheels spinning, smoking, flinging mud, rocks and pine brush into the woman's face bent close above them in her frantic efforts with hands and feet to keep the brush and rocks under the wheel.

"Try rocking out," the officer said. "Pull up, then shift, quick, into reverse."

The soldier looked at the emptiness in front of him. With the bent young pines cut away, the bumper seemed to hang above the valley. He moved at last, a few inches forward, but slowly, while the woman pushed rocks behind the rear wheels. The car stopped. The driver shifted again into reverse. The woman stood waiting between the side of the car and the bluff, her long arms a little lifted, the big jointed fingers of her great hands wide spread, her eyes on the back wing. The motor roared again, the back wheels bit an inch or so into the rocks and mud, then spun. The woman plunged, flinging her two hard palms against the wing. Her body arched with the push like a too tightly strung bow; her eyes bulged; the muscles of her neck and face writhed under the thin brown



skin; her big shots dug holes in the mud. The car hung, trembling, shivering, and one of the woman's feet began to slide towards the bluff edge.

Then her body seemed slowly to lengthen, for the car had moved. Her hands stayed with the wing until it pulled away from them. She fell sideways by the bluff edge so that the front wheel scraped her hip and the bumper touched strands of her dark hair tumbled from the thick knob worn high on her head. She stayed a moment in the mud, her knees doubled under her, her drooping head between her arms and her whole body heaving with great gasping breaths. Then she lifted her head, shook it as if to clear some dimness from her eyes and got slowly to her feet. Still gasping, she hurried to the car, jerked the door open and started to get in, but with the awkwardness of one unused to cars she bumped her head against the door-frame. She was just getting her wide shoulders through, her eyes on the child's face, when the officer opened the door on his side, stepped part way in and tried to pick up the child. It was heavier than he had thought, and instead of lifting it he jerked it quickly, a hand on either shoulder, across the seat and through the door.

The woman snatched at the child but caught only the blanket. She tried to jump into the car, but her long loose coat-tail got under her feet and for an instant she was unable to rise, trapped by the coat-tail. Her eyes were big, unbelieving, as the man straightened from pulling the child into the road and said, "You've helped undo a little of the damage you've done, but I've no time for giving rides. I'm a part of the Army, travelling on important business. If you must go with me, you'll leave your child in the road." He put one foot into the car and said to the driver, "Go on."

The woman gave the driver a swift measuring glance and saw his face turned straight ahead as if he were a part of the car to be stopped or started at the will of the other. She gave an awkward squatting lunge across the car, her hands flung palm outward as when she had flung herself against the wing. One hand caught the officer's wrist, the other caught his shoulder, pushing, grasping more than striking, for she was still entangled in her coat.

He half sat, half fell in the road, one foot across the child. She reached from the doorway of the car for the child, and her voice came, a low

breathless crying: "Cain't you see my youngen's choked to death? I've got to git him to a doctor."

One of the child's hands moved aimlessly, weakly knocking the blanket from its face. The woman gave a gasping cry, her voice breaking. "Amos, Amos. It's Mommie. Amos, honey, Amos?" She was whispering now, a questioning whisper, while the child's head dangled over her arm. His unseeing eyes were rolled far back; the whites bulged out of his dark, purplish face, while saliva dribbled from his blue-lipped, swollen mouth. He gave a short whispering breath that seemed to go no deeper than his choked-up throat. She blew in his mouth, shook him, turned him over, repeating the questioning whisper, "Amos, oh Amos?"

The driver, who had leaped from his seat when she pushed the officer through the car, was staring at the child, his hands under the older man's elbows, though the latter was already up and straightening his cap. "Shike him by the heels—slap him on the back," the young soldier said.

"Yes, take him by the heels," the other man repeated. "Whatever is choking him might come loose." And now he seemed more man than soldier, at once troubled and repelled by the sick child.

The woman was looking about her, rocking the child cradled in her arms. "It's a disease," she said. "They's no shaken it out." She saw what she had apparently been hunting. A few feet up the road was a smooth wide shelf of sandstone, like a little porch hung above the valley. She ran there, laid the child on the stone, begging of the men, "Help me, help me," meanwhile unbuttoning the little boy's blue-cotton jumper and shirt. "Bring me a rock," she said over her shoulder, "flat like fer a pillar."

The young soldier looked around him, and picked up a squarish piece of sandrock. She slipped it high up under the child's shoulders so that the swollen neck arched upward, stretched with the weight of the head, which had fallen backward.

"Help me," she repeated to the young soldier. "You'll have to hold his head, tight." She looked up at the officer, who stared at her, wondering. "You hold his hands and keep his feet down. He can't fight it much—I think—I guess he's past feelen anything."

"Wouldn't it be better," the officer said, "to go quickly to the nearest doctor?"

"Hold his hands an keep his feet down," she said in a low voice. "They's no use a talken a gitten to th doctor; th war got th closest; th next is better'n fifteen miles down th road—an mebbe out a his surgery."

She looked again at the child, struggling feebly now with a sharp hoarse breath, all her eyes and her thoughts for him so that she seemed alone by the sloping sandrock with the mists below her in the valley. She touched his forehead, whispering, "Amos, I can't let th war git you, too." Then her eyes were on his neck bowed up above the rock pillow, and they stayed there as she repeated, "Hold him tight now."

The older man, with the air of one humouring a forlorn and helpless creature, took the child's hands in one of his and put the other about its ankles. The young soldier, gripping the child's head, drew a sharp, surprised breath, but the other, staring down at patched overall knees, saw nothing until when he looked up the long bright knife was drawing swiftly away from the swollen neck, leaving behind it a thin line that for an instant seemed no cut at all. The woman did not look away from the reddening line, but was like a stone woman, her face frozen, the lips bloodless, pressed together, large drops of sweat on her forehead.

The officer cried: "You can't do that! You're—you're killing. You can't do that!"

He might have been wind stirring fog in the valley for all she heard. The fingers of her left hand moved quickly, pulling the cut skin apart, holding it, thumb on one side, finger on the other. "Please," the man was begging, his voice choked as if from nausea.

The knife moved again, and in the silence there came a little hissing. The child struggled, gave a hoarse, inhuman whistling cry. The woman lifted the child's neck higher, and then swiftly drew out a clean folded handkerchief from her pocket.

She gently but quickly wiped the gaping hole, whispering to the child as it struggled, giving its little hoarse cries. "Save yer breath, honey; thet little ole cut ain't nothen fer a big boy like you nigh four years old." She spoke in a low jerky voice like one who has run a long way. She laid down the handkerchief, hunted with her free hand an instant in her back hair, brought out a hairpin, wiped it on the handkerchief, inserted the bent end in the cut, and then slowly, watching the hole carefully, drew her hand from under the child's neck.

The young soldier, who had never loosened his grip on the child's

head, drew a long shivering breath and looked with admiration at the woman, searching for her eyes; but finding them still on the child, he looked towards the officer, and at once gave an angry, whispering, "I'll be damned."

She looked round and saw that the officer had collapsed in a heap, one hand still clutching the child's hands. "He's chicken-hearted," she said, turning back to the child. "You'd better stretch him out. Loosen his collar—he's too tight in his clothes anyhow. Go on, I can manage."

The young soldier got up, smiling a secret, pleased sort of smile, and the woman gave him an uneasy glance. "Don't you be a letten him roll off the bluff edge."

"No?" the other said, smiling down at Amos, who was breathing hoarsely and quickly, but breathing, his face less darkly blue. After a moment's hesitation and with a swift glance at Gertie, he put his hands under the officer's arms, standing in front of him so that the officer was between him and the bluff.

The woman gave the two a quick, worried glance. "It's high there; watch out."

"I'm quite all right," the officer said, raising his head slowly and shaking the other's hands away. He lifted a greenish, watery-eyed face that seemed no soldier's face at all. "How's the little one?" he asked, getting to his feet.

"Breathe," the woman said.

"You've done a thing many doctors would be afraid to do without an operating-room or anything," he said, all his need for haste having somehow dropped away. He stood looking at the woman as if there were something he would like to say but could not.

She dabbed at the blood and mucus bubbling through the hole. "If that stuff runs down his windpipe and into his lungs, it'll be bad," she said, as if talking to herself more than to the men. She looked about her, at the little pine trees, at the tops of the black gum and poplar rising by the bluff, then away across the road as if searching for something. "Once I saved a cow that was choked—an in her windpipe I put a piece of cane."

"What is it?" the officer asked, careful not to look at the child. "It doesn't seem like plain choking."

"I disremember what they call it now; used to be they said membranous croup." She looked towards the young soldier, who stood in

respectful silence behind the other. "Could you hold this open and watch him; I'll have to git somethin to put in it. It'll take jist a minnit. They's a little poplar right across th road."

Hesitatingly, the young man came with a fresh clean handkerchief of his own and took the hairpin and the woman's place by the child. She hurried across the road to a little poplar, and with one swift stroke cut a short bough about the thickness of her middle finger. She stripped the grey bark from it as she crossed the road, then stopped, knife lifted, to look at a red card lettered in black, tacked to a fair sized pine tree. Most of the print was small, but large enough for men in passing cars to read were the words: MEN, WOMEN, WILLOW RUN, UNCLE SAM, LIVING QUARTERS. Her knife came down in one long thrust against the card. It fell and she walked on, the knife working now with swift, twisting cuts, forming a hole in one end of the wood.

"You shouldn't have done that," the older man said, nodding towards the card at the foot of the pine. "They need workers badly."

She nodded, glancing towards the child. "But in our settlement they ain't anybody else they can git," she said.

"Is your husband in the armed forces?" he asked.

"His examinen date is still about three weeks off."

"Does he work in a factory?"

"He hauls coal in his own truck—when he can git petrol—an th miners can git dynamite an caps an stuff to work in th coal."

"The big mines are more efficient," he said. "They need materials worse."

"Th only miners they left us is two cripples an one real old."

"But a good miner back here in these little mines would be a waste of manpower, working without machinery," he said.

She studied the cut in the child's neck, listened, frowning, to the short whistling breaths. She nodded to the man's words grudgingly, as if she had heard the words many times but could not or would not understand.

"It's like the farmers," the officer went on, his voice slightly apologetic as he glanced towards the child, who was struggling again so that the soldier must lay down the handkerchief and hold his hands. "They can't exempt every little one-horse farmer who has little to sell. A man has to produce a lot of what the country needs."

She did not nod, but her lips tightened so that her mouth was a pale

straight slit. "They warn't a farmer in all our settlement big enough," she said, and her voice was low and sullen.

"Have you any relatives in the armed forces?" he asked.

"Jist cousins an in laws an sich—now."

"Now?"

"Since yesterday mornen—I had a brother till then."

"Oh." His voice was filled with a kind of proper sadness. "Let us hope he is only missing and that——"

"Jesse that's my man's brother—he's th one that's missen. Fer my brother th telegram said, 'Kilt in action.' " The knife was still, and she sat a moment staring out across the hills, repeating slowly, tonelessly, "Kilt in action." Then, still in the toneless talking-to herself voice: "These same leaves was green when they took him—an he'd planted his corn. Some of it he c'w come up."

"He was a farmer?" the man asked.

"One a them little ones." The knife fought the wood with sharp swift jabs, forming a hole the length of the short piece of poplar. The man, watching uncomfortably, said, "You are very skilful with a knife."

"I've allus whittled."

"What?"

"Oh, handles."

"Handles?"

She looked down at the hand that held the poplar wood, the back brown and wrinkled, the palm smooth with the look of yellowed leather. "Hox handles, saw handles, axe handles, corn knife handles, plough handles, churn dasher handles, hammer handles, all kinds a handles. Sometimes I make em fer th neighbours."

He was silent, his glance fixed on her hands. "Handles," he said at last. "There wouldn't be much fun in handles."



Her face softened for an instant. "I've never had much time fer whittlen foolishness. Oh, a few dolls. Cassie—that's my least girl—she's crazy over th dolls I whittle, but when I git all settled I'm aimen to work up a piece of wild-cherry wood I've got. It's big enough fer th head an shoulder uv a fair-sized man it"—her voice was low again, wandering as if she talked to herself—"if I can ever hit on th right face." She glanced at the soldier struggling to keep the child's hand from clawing at his neck. "Hold out a little minnit longer. I've about got this hole through."

The older man stood so that if he looked straight in front of him he could see the woman but not the child. "What kind of face?" he asked.

She shook the shavings out of the rapidly deepening hole, began on the other end. "I don't know. I've thought on Christ—but somehow His face ain't never clear er somethen. Maybe some other—old Amos, I liked, or Ecclesiastes, or Judas."

"Judas?" And he gave her a sharp, suspicious-seeming glance.

She nodded, her eyes on the knife blade as she talked. "Not Judas with his mouth all drooly, his hand held out fer th silver, but Judas given th thirty pieces away. I reckon," she went on, "they's many a one does meanness fer money—like Judas. But they's not many like him gives th money away an feels sorry onct they've got it."

"You seem to be quite a student of the Bible."

She shook her head. "Th Bible's about th only thing I've ever read—when I was a-grown up my mother was sick a heap an my father hurt his leg in th log woods. I had to help him, an never got much schoolen but what he gave me."

"And he made you study the Bible."

"He made me git things by heart th way they used to do in th old days—poetry an th Constitution an a heap a th Bible." She rose and walked towards the child, working swiftly until the hole in the tiny wooden pipe was to her liking, and then with the same gentle skill with which she had whittled she put the tube into the child's neck. She then wrapped him swiftly in the blanket, and with no glance at either man walked quickly to the car.

The officer pushed himself into a corner as far from the woman and child as possible. He sat stiffly, trying not to look at the child or show that the gurgling cries it gave nauseated him. The woman sensed this and tried to make herself as small as possible, her muddy feet unmoving

by the door, her great shoulders hunched over the child as she watched the wooden pipe.

The road left the high ridges and followed the twisting course of a creek down into the valley of the Cumberland. Above them on the shoulder of the ridge lay a steep little clearing; stumpy first-year new ground it looked to be, not half tended. Even in the rainy twilight Gertie could see the smallness of the fodder shocks—a woman's fodder shocks. Held up against the hillside on long front legs like stilts was a little plank house with a tar paper roof. A white-headed child came round the house, stumbling under the sticks of stove wood hugged in its arms, while on the high porch steps two other children played with a spotted hound.

Though it lay on the woman's side of the road, both glanced at it—the first house after miles of Cumberland National Forest. Then both saw the sea-boarding with one blue star in the front window by the door.

"What crops do they raise in this country?" the officer asked, wanting to make some sound above the child's breathing.

"A little uv everything."

"But what is their main crop?" he insisted.

"Youngens," she said. "Youngens fer th wars an them factories."

He turned his head sharply away, as if he wished to hear no more, but almost at once his unwilling glance was flicking the child's face, where the blueness was thinning, and the eyes, less bulging now, showed their dark colouring through the half open lids. "Your child needs a hospital," he said. "You'd better go with us until we reach one."

"Th closest that ud take him with a disease like this is mebbe Lexington—an that's nigh a hunnert miles away. He needs some drugs, like they give fer this, right now—he ought'n't to wait."

"He needs oxygen," the man said. Once more the sounds of the child's battle for breath filled the quiet car. "Do you farm?" the officer asked in the same aimless, sound making voice.

"A little."

"I guess every family back in these hills has a little patch of land and keeps a cow or so and a few sheep."

The woman gave a slow headshake. "Not everybody has got a little piece of land."

"I suppose you have."

She shook her head again with a slowness that might have been weariness. "We're renten," she said, "on Old John Ballew's place; he gits half—we git half." She hesitated, then added slowly, in a low voice, as if not quite certain of her words, "Now, that is, but—we're aimen—we're buyen us a place—all our own "

"How nice," he said, still making sound "A place for you and your children to live while your husband is in service "

"Yes," she said A warm look came into her troubled eyes as when she had spoken of the block of wood "Silas Tipton's went off to Muncie to work in a factory. He wanted his wife and youngens with him, so he sold his place It's a good place—old, a log house—built good like they built in th old days He sold it to Old John Ballew fer to get money to move on Old John don't want th place His boys is all gone "

He nodded "So you'll farm it while your husband's gone

"Yes," she said, speaking with more certainty than before, as if her words had made the land her own "My biggest boy, Reuben, he's twelve," and her eyes were warm again "He likes farm work an he's a good hand."

"You like to farm," he said, glancing at her muscle corded wrists showing beneath the too short coat sleeves

She nodded "I've allus farmed My father had a big farm—I hepped him when I was growen up My brother is—" she stopped, went on again, her words a mumble, "—was younger than me

The rainy autumn dark came swiftly down like a settling bird There were sharp steep curves now where the dripping limestone cliffs above gave back the sound of the car's horn, and below them lay a narrow black plain pricked with lights A train blew high above them somewhere in the limestone walls The child started at the strange sound, and the woman whispered, "Nothen's goen to hurt you, honey "

On the low road in the village by the Cumberland, the lighted windows of homes were squares of brightness behind the shadows of the leafless, dripping trees Then came paths with shop windows bright above them, and the driver went more slowly, looking first this way and that

The car stopped in a wash of light from a broad window, and the woman, as if unaccustomed to so much brightness, squinched her eyes and twisted her head about as she drew the blanket more closely about the child.

"Wait," the officer said. "Hatcher, make certain there is a doctor's surgery close by and that he is in."

The woman watched the soldier go across the street. Then she lifted the child on one arm, and with a quick and furtive movement reached into her coat pocket, her hand going down into the lining, searching. The officer turned a little, glancing at her in his quick, impatient way, and her hand at once became still, and did not search again until he had turned away.

Soon the young soldier opened the door, saying, "The doctor's in his surgery straight across the street."

The woman hesitated. Her hand, folded into a fist, came slowly out of the bottom of her coat. She flushed, opening the fist, showing a worn and limp bill. "I want to pay you for the ride," she said, "but I can't find the right change."

The officer looked at the outstretched five dollar bill, surprise reddening his face. "I wouldn't think of charging," he said, staring at the bill, so worn, so wrinkled, the five was hardly legible.

"But I aimed to pay," she said, touching his hand with the money.

He reached quickly for the money like one suddenly changing his mind. "I can change it," he said, and turning away from her drew out a wallet, but it was only after she was out of the car that he put bills, folded closely together, into her hand, saying, "A dollar's fair enough, I guess." And then, "Good luck. Help her across the street, Hatcher."

"I can manage," she said, dropping the money into her pocket.

The young soldier stooped quickly and picked up a small bright thing fallen from the folds of the child's blanket. He handed it to her as they walked across the street.

"Keep it for the baby," he said. "Stars like that are kind of scarce."

"Oh," she said, "the man's star—I didn't mean to tear it off. You'd better give it back to him, somebody 'ull git him fer losen it. I've heared they're mighty hard on soldiers if their clothes don't look right."

"Not on the likes of him," the other said. They had gone a little distance down the path when the man pointed to a lighted doorway. "There's the doctor's," he said.

She glanced timidly towards the door. "I ain't never been to a doctor before. Clovis, my husband, he's allus took th' youngens th' few times it was somethen Aunt Sue Annie couldn't cure."

His flat, absent-minded eyes opened wide in astonishment. "Lady, you can't be afraid of nothing. Just walk in."

SHE STEPPED into a small square hall and stood an instant hesitant before two closed doors, then opened the one that looked most used. She walked into the room, then stopped suddenly, blinded by the lights and confusedly aware that what seemed to be a whole roomful of people sitting on chairs and sofas and standing by the walls had looked up at her coming. They turned to her with the quick, interested glances of people so long hemmed together with their pains and troubles that any occurrence, no matter how trivial, is a welcome diversion. They looked more intently now, for she was large beyond any woman most had ever seen, and there was from the rough clothing, dishevelled hair and mud streaked face the crying need for help.

A thin hump-shouldered woman with a sleeping baby across her knees pressed herself into a corner of a small sofa to make room. Gertie backed swiftly away. "Your baby might git this bad disease—an mine can't wait." She hurried back into the hall, knocked on the other door. A woman from the waiting room called in a sharp, city like voice "The doctor's busy sewing up a man's leg. You'll have to wait your turn."

Gertie knocked more loudly. She was opening the door when a woman all in white came through it "You must wait outside. The doctor's——"

"I cain't," Gertie interrupted. She pulled back the blanket, held Amos towards the woman.

The nurse looked down at Amos, studied his face an instant before she saw the blood-streaked neck set with the wooden pipe. She turned swiftly and her voice came even and smooth "This way, please."

She led Gertie to a tiny room that held nothing but a high iron bed, one chair, and a bright white light in the ceiling. "Put the baby on the bed and undress him—if you can without hurting his neck," the nurse said, and was gone. She was back with the doctor before Gertie had Amos out of his overalls.

He was a tall thin man with pale skin and pale hair. He considered Amos briefly, but unlike the nurse he let his eyes stop and stay on the wooden pipe. His mouth opened, then closed, opened again as he said to the nurse in a slow, seemingly unconcerned voice, "I believe you'd



better set up the oxygen tent." And to Gertie, "I believe we'd better use a different kind of tube." And over his shoulder to the nurse, "We'd better rig up an intravenous infusion, put what drugs we can in it. Break open that new box of serum and bring it first." He fitted a stethoscope to his ears and began listening to Amos. Gertie stood pulling the knuckles of her left hand with her right, studying the doctor's face.

He finished and looked at her. "Diphtheria out your way?"

She nodded. "But I didn't know—till down in the evenen today. Sue Annie come an told me. Will he——" She looked towards the wooden pipe. "Did I do—wrong? I couldn't just stand an watch him."

He took the hypodermic needle the nurse handed him, and shot stuff into Amos's hip. "You've done well. I believe he'll be all right."

Then the nurse came in rolling an iron tube of a thing on wheels with one hand, the other holding a tray covered with a towel, and the doctor told Gertie to wait outside.

The nurse was constantly hurrying back and forth and Gertie heard what she knew was a telephone ringing. She heard often the words "doctor" and "busy," and once the nurse said. "He'll get there in time—her pains are still five minutes apart." In between times she heard groans from the room she had come past, and, smothered and low through the walls, the cries of babies, the low-voiced talk of the waiting sick people, the opening and closing of the outside door as more came in.

The doctor came out of the room where Amos lay, and Gertie hurried towards him. "Sleepy?" he asked. She shook her head.

"You'll have to sit all night by his bed and watch that tube. Don't let it plug up; if you doze and it plugs he'll choke. I'll look in again, maybe about midnight."

The nurse lingered an instant and smiled a tired smile. "There's a place across the street sells coffee—some time later maybe I can stay with him long enough for you to run and get a cup." And she was gone after the doctor.

Gertie leaned a long time over Amos, looking down at him in the tent. She studied the needle in his arm, the bottle hanging above him, frowned over the new tube in his neck; such a flimsy little thing it looked to hold the windpipe open. After a while there was a drop on the end of it, and she reached through the tent flap and wiped it away; then quickly and with a guilty air she felt his pulse; almost at once she took her hand

away and smiled a faint but joyful smile. She sat by the bed, stiff and still in the straight-backed chair, shielding her eyes with her hand against the white light. She watched and listened to the child, but her empty hands were restless; they smoothed back her hair, straightened her coat, touched Amos, and at last began to pick some burrs off her faded apron. The picking was too slow, and without looking away from the child she let one hand go into her apron pocket and bring out the knife.

However, instead of scraping on the burrs, the knife hung idle above her lap while she reached in her pocket with the other hand and brought out the officer's change from the five dollar bill, forgotten until now. Hardly was the tight little wad half unfolded when the knife dropped into her lap and she seized the money with both hands. She unfolded the four bills quickly, staring hard at each. She sprang up. The forgotten knife slid to the floor and lay there while she held a bill under the light. She turned it over and over, felt it between thumb and finger, rubbed her eyes, looked again. Turn by turn she examined the four bills, but always they showed a ten in each corner.

She stood a long time holding the money, looking about, glancing now and then at the child as if to make certain he was asleep. Like a mother whose eyes and hands cannot get enough of a newborn child she smoothed each bill between her hard palms, whispered the letters of the name, "H a-m-i-l t-o-n."

She remembered her knife, picked it up and dropped it into her pocket. She sat down, watched Amos, but still her glance went often to the money as she spread it widely in her lap so that the whole of each bill showed. Now and then she looked uneasily over her shoulder, and always she listened. She heard cars on the highway, slithering in the rain. Twice they stopped, and there were feet running up the steps, then knockings on the doctor's door. Sometimes a train whistle blew, and once there came a faint spattering of music.

Clutching the money, she got up to wipe another drop from the tube, and then was restless, pacing back and forth in the tiny room. She had stopped to watch a maple bough swinging, tapping the window in the spattering rain, when she heard a truck, loud, the motor coughing a little, coming down the highway from the south. She waited, her face tense with listening while the truck stopped and feet came up the steps, across the porch; there came then a loud, insistent knocking. Somebody

answered at last, and this time the feet did not go away. She shoved the money down into her coat pocket, then stood straight and still and watched the door.

It opened slowly part way, and her husband's voice, troubled for all its slow softness, asked, as if afraid of the answer, "Well, how is he?"

"Better," she said, not moving towards the door but looking at Clovis, his tall thin body stooped a little, his for ever hunched shoulders hunched still more as they always were when he stepped through a strange door.

He continued to hesitate in the doorway, throwing his worried glance first at her and then at the tent over Amos with the half emptied bottle of yellowish liquid hung above it. The fright grew in his eyes. "He's a goen to be all right," she said, her voice reassuring, gentle as if speaking to a troubled child.

He drew a long shivering breath, came through the door, straightened, and tiptoed towards the bed. "I figgered everthing ud be all right when old Dock come home jist as I was pullen in with the truck. I lowed you'd been lucky an got a ride quick."

She nodded. "Yes, I got a ride—quick."

"Your mom wouldn't give in fer me to leave her bed. I stayed till th worst uv her fainten spells was over. An anyhow I didn't have petrol enough to git all th way in—I had to go to th Valley an beg em fer petrol like I was asken fer my life an——" His jaw dropped, and he gave a low whispered, "I'll be danged," as for the first time he saw the cut neck. His long hand went to her shoulder, gripped it. "I knowed he was bad er you wouldn't a gone runnen off to th doctor an yer mom a needen you so—but I didn't low he was that bad or I'd a left yer mom an come."

Gertie's voice came kind and comforting. "I'm th one ought to ha knowed—sooner. I was bad worried but kept a thinken all day—I'd run back ever little while to look at him—but I was still a worken in th corn a thinken it was croup when Aunt Sue Annie come an told me. 'Git on thet mule an go,' she said."

Clovis's hand did not leave her shoulder. "I hope you didn't have to stand an watch that doctor cut that hole." He turned away, gagging, paling.

She hesitated, studying Amos, then slowly shook her head. "I didn't watch."

Harriette Arnow



HARRIETTE ARNOW was born in Wayne County, Kentucky, and after receiving a B.S. degree at the University of Louisville was a school teacher for a few years. She then took a series of odd jobs—as a waitress, a cashier, an assistant in a lending library—which gave her more time to herself, for she was determined to rid herself of “the writing virus” which had attacked her early in life. In 1939 she married, and with her husband bought “a farm of sorts where we lived for five years as writers and farmers, mostly farmers.”

Since then she has had to sandwich in her writing among household chores, bringing up two children, gardening and moving house. *The Dollmaker* was written mostly between four and seven o’clock in the morning.

Her husband is on the staff of *The Detroit Times*, and the Arnows now live in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

CRUSADER'S TOMB



CRUSADER'S TOMB

A condensation of the book by

A. J. CRONIN



STEPHEN DESMONDE's father had intended him for a career in the Church, but Stephen was an artist, and an artist he had to be. Faced with opposition and misunderstanding from his family and friends, forced to leave the home in Sussex that he loved, and even his country, he followed unswervingly the course that he had chosen.

Here, in a new novel by one of the world's favourite authors, is the turbulent life-story of a genius. The reader follows Stephen on his restless way—to the Bohemian art world of Paris, behind the scenes in a French travelling circus, through the Spanish countryside and, at last, to the warm and tender love that helped him to reach the only goal he ever prized.

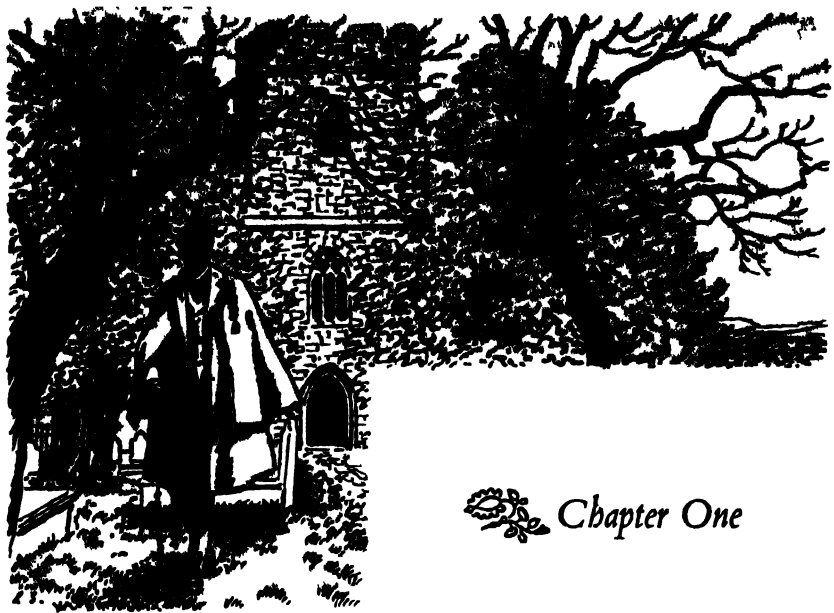
“A noble theme . . . expressed by such a sincere and accomplished writer.”

—*The Listener*

“A first-class novel.”

—John L. Shawlea in the
Northern Daily Telegram

“Absorbing to the end.” —*The Star*



Chapter One

AFTERNOON had turned to evening and all the sweep and movement of the Downs lay still, bathed in pearly light. The drenched grass, silvered as with hoar, gave off a wispy vapour that hung cobwebs on the hedgerows, made lacework in the hollows of the fields. The dew-ponds, saucers of skimmed milk, held no image of a yellow moon that watched, round and low, like the eye of a great cat, crouched on the hill, ready to lap.

Into this bright stillness, from a small Norman church there emerged, following the thud of oak and the clang of a heavy bolt, the figure of a clergyman, Bertram Desmonde, Rector of Stillwater.

Bareheaded, with a cape about his shoulders, he threaded the graveyard maze of lichened slabs, passed the two great twisted yews, of which the younger had undoubtedly made bows for Sussex archers five centuries before this evening in 1912, and went through the wicket to the lane. Here he paused and, with a long breath, drew in the beauty of his glebe, a good two hundred acres. Beneath him, bright with lights, stood the Rectory.

Solidly Georgian, with Palladian windows and a spacious portico

supported by fluted columns, it was a real country house, built by his great-grandfather in 1780. Traces of an early Tudor building still persisted in the brick barn and stables, in the exquisite old wall of flint and rounded pebbles surrounding the large kitchen garden. Embosomed in soft lawns, bordered by beds of tulips and primulas, this house, home of the Desmondes for so many years, sent a proud warmth into the Rector's heart.

Almost certainly the Desmondes had come over with the Conqueror. One of them, the *Sieur d'Esmonde*, who had gone to the Crusades, lay beneath his marble effigy in the little downland church. They had served their country well in the three professions open to a gentleman in the Church, at the bar and in the army. The Rector's brother, Hubert, was now partially retired to Simla Lodge, some fifteen miles away, with the rank of general.

"A fine evenin' to you, sir."

Old Mould, the Rector's head gardener, who was also his sexton, was limping up the lane to close the church.

"Good evening, Mould. I've locked up, you may turn and go back with me. Stephen comes home tonight, you know."

"And high good news it be, sir. I hope he shall find time to come rabbiting along of me. He added more gravely: "We shall have him in the pulpit soon, belikes."

"He still has some way to go, Mould." Bertram smiled. "Though I daresay you'd rather hear a youngster fresh from Oxford than an old fogey like me."

"No, Parson, I h'ain't served the Desmondes fifty year without I come to know their quality. There be none better."

It needed only this touching proof of loyalty to set a seal upon the Rector's mood. Ah, this England, he thought, and here the very heart of it, his little parish that would be Stephen's too, timeless and changeless as eternity.

"We shall want Albert to help with the luggage."

"I shall send him up, master, if he be home. I'm aving trouble with that boy o' mine."

"He will settle down in time," Bertram answered equably. "Don't be hard on him."

He parted from the old man and, some moments later, stood in the

wide entrance hall of the Rectory, yielding his cape to his daughter, Caroline. "Not here yet?"

"No, Father. But they should not be long. Claire has gone to the station in her new motor."

"We really should get one of those contraptions." A light of whimsy momentarily relieved the austerity of Bertram's thin features. "Useful for parish visiting."

"You cannot be serious, Father. You know how strongly you object to the odour and the dust. And don't I do well enough for you with the pony-cart?"

Her father's absent look as he waited for the sound of wheels punished her severely. Would he never appreciate her devotion, realize that her one desire was to serve him? From the first moment which began her long day she shouldered the burden of his household, supervised the farm, dealt with his correspondence.

"Is your mother coming down?" he asked

"I think not. I bathed her forehead with cologne this afternoon. But the discomfort is still there."

"Then we shall be four at dinner."

"Only three. Claire cannot stay."

"A pity. Still . . . there will be other days."

She perceived that, despite his high regard for Claire, daughter of Lady Broughton of the neighbouring Court, and his warm approval of the tacit understanding between her and his elder son, he was glad on this night to have Stephen to himself.

With an effort to keep her tone even, she said, "You look tired, Father. Don't let Stephen keep you up too late."

"Do not fuss, Caroline. And by the by, I hope you have something good for us to eat."

"There's mulligatawny soup, and the salmon Uncle Hubert sent us, with cucumber and green sauce, then a saddle of lamb with our own peas and new potatoes. For the sweet, Beasley has made that whipped apple charlotte Stephen likes so much."

"Well done, my dear. But isn't that the chug of the motor?" Advancing to the door, he threw it open, disclosing a small De Dion coupé, from which two figures emerged.

"Stephen!"

"How are you, Father? And you, Caroline? Davie isn't here?"

"Not yet . . . he breaks up next Monday."

The fan of light from the portico revealed a slight figure struggling with a leather valise—Mould's boy had not appeared—a glimpse, also, of chiselled features in a narrow, thoughtful, sensitive face. Then came a tall girl in gauntlets and a long tweed coat. Her motoring bonnet, veil draped, absurdly like a scone, could not quite destroy her air of quiet composure.

"Claire, dear." The Rector took her arm in a near paternal gesture "Cannot you stay for dinner with us?"

"I do wish I might. But Mother has some tenants coming who cannot be put off."

"Ah well! One must pay for being lady of the manor. Is it not a sweet evening?"

"Perfect! Coming over from Halborough it was bright as day." Her voice softened as she turned her head, disclosing a pure profile. "Wasn't it beautiful, Stephen?" Her smile lingered for a moment in the darkness. "But I must not keep you. Good night. Come to us soon . . ."

When she had gone, Bertram put his arm about his son's shoulders, led him into the house.

"It's good to have you home, Stephen. You are famished, I'm sure. Run up and see your mother. Then come to dinner."

And while Caroline heaved in a bag of books, which had been left on the porch, he stood watching Stephen ascend the stairs, looking upward with an expression of unguarded fondness.

After their excellent dinner, the Rector led his son to the study, a companionable room with a sporting flavour despite the desk bearing Pusey's Sermons, the Ecclesiastical Calendar and a folded purple stole. A pair of worn brown leather chairs flanked the hearthstone, and above the Adam mantel two bone handled hunting crops were crossed beneath a mounted fox mask.

Bertram took up a dusty bottle and, having drawn the crumbling cork, poured out two glasses of port. He was a temperate man who touched alcohol only rarely, but this was an occasion to be marked in the true family tradition.

"Your grandfather laid this down," he remarked, holding the dark purplish wine to the light.

Stephen, who detested port, made a murmur of appreciation as he raised the glass to his lips. "It seems very sound, sir."

"Yes, your grandfather knew what he was doing. He was a good man, Stephen. A true English country gentleman. One could wish no finer epitaph."

"My grandmother, too," Stephen prompted dutifully, for he had resolved to be unreservedly filial. "She was not far behind him."

Bertram's smile faded. "She was an indomitable woman," he said, "immensely charitable. And devoted to my father."

Could it be that the Rector was thinking of his own marriage? He straightened now and sipped his port, aware that he must break the constrained silence that had fallen between himself and Stephen. How strange it was to care so deeply, and yet to sense this embarrassment whenever they were alone together. He never experienced such lack of ease in the company of his two other children. Of course, he was fond of Caroline, but her homeliness jarred, unconsciously, his sense of family pride. As for David, now nearly thirteen, here, alas, his love was swamped by disappointment and pity. To think that any son of his should be an epileptic!

"It's good you finished so well at Oxford. You've done splendidly."

"Oh, I don't know. I seemed to lose heart at the end."

"I felt like that too, when I came down from Trinity, though I loved it just as much as you."

Stephen was silent. How could he tell his father that he had hated the university: the sense of being outside of life, the endless preoccupation with sports? How could he tell him, above all, his detestation of the career ordained for him? But the Rector had resumed. "You have earned a holiday. Claire wants you over for tennis. And Uncle Hubert has asked you to Simla Lodge. Your cousin Geoffrey is there, on short leave."

Again Stephen did not answer, and Bertram began to question if his son were not suppressing signs of strain. His natural pallor seemed intensified and his eyes held that darkness which had since his earliest days been a symptom of emotional or physical distress. I hope he is not sickening for something, thought Bertram, and quickly he declared: "You must certainly have a rest. No need for you to go to the Settlement until July. Allowing five months for London, your ordination would then be at Christmas."

Stephen had foreseen and dreaded this moment, tried, on his friend Glyn's advice, to hasten it, written a score of letters and always torn them up. Now it was upon him.

"Father . . . I do not want to go on and take orders."

The Rector's expression did not change. Sudden and complete surprise had fixed his features in a semblance of normality. "Not take orders?" he said.

"I feel I am not suited to the Church. I'm not good with people. I couldn't preach a decent sermon to save my life. . . ."

"These things will come." Bertram was frowning now. "My own sermons are not particularly brilliant. But they suffice."

"But, Father, I have no interest in the work. I feel I'm not fitted to succeed you here. . . ."

"You're tired, and run-down, my boy. You'll feel different after a few brisk tramps on the Downs."

"No, Father." Stephen tightened his will. "This has been coming on for a long time. Surely you understand what I mean . . . what I feel I must do with my life."

The Rector gazed in startled fashion at his son.

"Stephen . . . it is not that wild notion again?"

"Yes, Father."

Silence vibrated between them. The Rector got to his feet and began to pace the room. "My dear boy," he said, with great seriousness, "I have never tried to bind you to me through your sense of duty. Yet you must realize how completely I've built upon your following me here. Stillwater means so much to me. And your mother's invalidism, David's unhappy disability, the fact that you are my eldest," his voice shook slightly, "my much beloved son, have caused me to rest my hopes on you. Nevertheless, upon my honour, it is you I am thinking of and not myself, when I beg you to forget this fantastic dream."

Stephen lowered his gaze so that he might not see the slight twitching of his father's cheek. "Surely I am entitled to my own life."

"Not that kind of life. To throw away your brilliant prospects, wreck your whole career, for a mere whim . . . it would be an outrage in the face of God. No, no. You are young for your years, Stephen. This mad idea seems all important now. But in a few years you'll smile at yourself for even having thought of it."

At this moment Stephen hated his father, yet was at the same time vanquished by the shamed consciousness of his paternal affection, and worst of all by a flood of childhood memories . . . of rides in the pony-cart, his father idling with the reins, of picnics on the Avon, hot sunlight on cool water, of family carols sung before the Christmas tree. How could one tear up such binding roots?

Bertram laid his hand with touching diffidence upon his son's shoulder

"You could not find it in your heart to go against me."

Stephen did not dare look up lest he should disgrace himself with tears. He was done for. And he had meant to fight so hard, had sworn to Glyn that he would win. "Very well," he mumbled at last. "I'll give the Settlement a trial and see what comes of it."

BERTRAM went upstairs slowly. Outside his wife's bedroom he hesitated, tipped gently, braced himself and entered.

Protected by a draught screen, Julia Desmond lay reading in bed, beneath a satin coverlet. She was a shapely, well preserved woman of forty five, with an easy, indolent air, plump smooth features, and thick chestnut hair which billowed like a cloud across the pillow. Marking the place in her book, Julia directed towards her husband an inquiring glance.

"So we have Stephen home with us," he said.

"Yes. I thought the dear boy looked well."

She could be depended on to express, in her aristocratic, self absorbed voice, an opinion exactly contrary to his own.

"How is the headache?"

"Better, thank you. I have just had a treatment."

He perceived, from the contraption on the side table, that she had just had her vibrations. On the fender a metal kettle hissed out a plume of steam indicating that in fifteen minutes the bran extract would be mixed, or was it now dried seaweed? Then the hot water bottle would be refilled, the eye pads moistened and laid on for sleep. And again, though he fought the question with determined Christian charity, the thought assailed him. Why had he ever married her?

She had been something of a beauty and a belle, and, as the only child of Sir Henry Marsden of Haselton Park, had been regarded in county

society as the catch of the season. Who could have guessed that she would later on reveal such marked peculiarity?

Except for a few garden parties in the early years of marriage, when, trailing a frilled parasol, she moved gracefully about the lawns, she had, with unruffled resolution, refused to interest herself in the work of the parish. She preferred to spend her days sitting, overdressed, by her window, or in the rose garden, engaged upon an endless embroidery which she put down occasionally to make notes of what she should report to her physician whom she visited in London twice a month. Her children, whom she had borne with absent-minded ease, had been to her no more than momentary episodes. She had retreated within herself into a little world of happy hypochondria.

And who, in heaven's name, could have foretold that her father, until the age of seventy no more than an amiable eccentric addicted to mechanical pursuits, would, in his dotage, launch a grandiose project for the construction of a flying machine—not an ordinary machine such as that subsequently flown by Blériot across the Channel, but a weird contraption presumed capable of rising vertically from the ground: a helicopter. Sir Henry had defiled his lovely park with sheds and hangar, spent money like water; in short, ruined himself. Haselton, which might have been Julia's, was now a girls' school, the great hangar a gymnasium.

Might it not be, thought Bertram, that something of this instability was now manifest in Stephen? Impossible. The boy too closely resembled him in mind and body. Yet in his anxiety he was tempted to seek some sort of consolation from his wife.

"My dear," he said, "while Stephen is with us I feel we should make an effort to take him out of himself."

Julia gazed at him in surprise. "My dear Bertram, you know very well that I cannot make an effort. And why should Stephen be taken *out* of himself?"

"... I am concerned about him. He has always been an unusual boy. He is going through a difficult time."

"What do you mean, Bertram? Is Stephen ill?"

"I think he is far from well. But I see you have no wish to share my anxiety."

"If you wish to tell me, my dear, I have no objection to hearing you. But I think I did my part in bringing your children into the world."

Afterwards, you made them your responsibility. I have never interfered."

"Truc." He tried to repress his bitterness. "But, Julia, there is something in Stephen that I don't understand. What is really in his mind? Who are his friends? Don't you recollect when Geoffrey visited him at Trinity last year he found a most impossible person in his room? A down-at-heel artist, a Welshman who kept pressing Stephen to go to Paris. To paint!"

He had got it out at last, and tensely, almost beseechingly, he waited for her to speak.

"I must confess, Bertram, I see little harm in all this. When I was at Interlaken with Papa I did some delightful little water colours of the lake. Stephen has always liked to draw."

He bit his lip hard. "This is no childish hobby, Julia. For more than a year now without a word to us, he has been travelling from Oxford to attend night art classes at the Slade."

"The Slade is a reputable institution. Stephen will have ample time to sketch between his sermons. And certainly drawing is soothing for the nerves."

Breathing somewhat quickly, he said: "I hope you are right, my dear. No doubt he will settle down when he gets into the swing of his work in London."

"No doubt he will. And Bertram, I have decided that I shall go to Cheltenham next month. There is a mineral in the waters there which I am told is excellent in promoting the flow of bile."

He said good night, in a low tone and quickly, lest he say something worse.



Chapter Two

ON A drizzling afternoon six weeks later Stephen, returning from a round of house-to-house parish visiting, walked slowly along Clunker Street in East Stepney. The sulphurous overcast from the London docks made the narrow thoroughfare more dreary. No light, no colour—only a row of deserted barrows, greasy cobblestones, a brewer's dray horse steaming in the rain, a passing omnibus splashing him with mud as he turned towards the Settlement.

This red brick structure, built into the line of broken-down stucco houses, reminded him of a small but efficient penitentiary. At that moment the front door swung open and the Warden, the Reverend Crispin Bliss, came out, umbrella poised, nose turned up to scent the weather, a tall, meagre form encased to the heels in a long black mackintosh.

"Ah, Desmonde . . . back already?"

The tone was feebly cordial, that of a man, Stephen felt, who had tried to like him, and could not, despite the best intentions. The Reverend Crispin Bliss was a devoted clergyman, a man of sincere yet narrow piety, but his manner was unprepossessing—dry, academic, touchily superior.

He offered Stephen the shelter of his umbrella and inquired

"You did all Skinners Row this afternoon?"

"Practically all, sir."

He did not confess that, since he expected a visit from Richard Glyn, he had scamped the odd numbers.

"How did you find old Mrs. Blimey?"

"Not altogether well, I'm afraid. As a matter of fact, I found her very drunk. I gave her five shillings yesterday to pay her room rent. She seems to have spent it on gin."

The Warden made a clicking sound with his tongue.

"Well . . . you will live and learn, Desmonde. You must not put temptation in the way of God's poor creatures."

"I suppose not. On the other hand, can one blame her for trying to escape from her misery for a few hours? She has a bad chest, can't get sewing work, and has pawned nearly everything in her room. I couldn't help thinking that if any of us had been in the same position we might have done exactly the same thing."

"Come, come, Desmonde. We should never, please God, find our selves in a like predicament." With a parting nod, somewhat distant, he stepped off, leaving Stephen to go upstairs to his narrow cubicle. The bed had not yet been made. The residents of the Settlement were supposed to do for themselves, but in the afternoon a little maid named Jenny Dill came in, ostensibly to supply the finishing touches, in reality to do most of the work. As Stephen flung himself into a Morris chair, he could hear her through the thin wall moving lightly in Loftus's room.

Loftus, a very elegant young man in a sacerdotal way, always left Jenny plenty to do in the shape of shoes to polish, suits to brush and put away. In a few minutes there was a tap on Stephen's door and, bearing duster and pail, she came spryly in

"Oh, sir, I beg your pardon. . . ."

"That's all right, you go ahead."

He watched her absently as she began to strip the sheets and turn his mattress.

She was a pleasant, trim little thing, with a high colour on her cheekbones, bright brown eyes and black hair. She looked a typical Cockney girl, thoroughly competent and nobody's fool. Yet there was about her an air of simplicity, an innocence and, above all, a vigour, as though she could not contain the energy and delight which throbbed in her healthy, young body. And as she moved about neatly, his hand went to the pencil and block upon the desk. With the pad upon his knee he began to draw

Presently she went to the fireplace and began to clear out the ashes. When she made to rise, he stopped her abruptly.

"Please don't move, Jenny."

Obediently, she held her stooping position

"You think I'm quite mad, don't you, Jenny? All the others in the district do."

"Oh no, sir," she protested vigorously. "We do think you're a morsel queer, of course, giving the lads' club sketching and the like, not like the other student clergymen who teach them to box. Why, when Mr. Geer had the lads you'd find them half killing one another. But all of us think that you're a very nice gentleman indeed."

"That's encouraging. Tell me, Jenny, if you were a bedridden old woman would you rather have a Bible or a bottle of gin?"

"I've got a Bible. But, sir, it'd depend how bad I was."

"Good, Jenny. You're as honest as the day. Here, what do you think of this?"

She examined doubtfully the drawing he held out to her. "I don't know about such things, sir, but it seems proper clever."

"Why, you silly girl, can't you see that it's you?"

"Well, now you mention it, sir," she answered modestly, "it does seem to be my back view. Only I wish I didn't have on my old dress."

Stephen laughed. "You're an excellent model, Jenny. I wish you could pose for me. I'd give you five shillings an hour."

She looked at him quickly, then glanced away

"That wouldn't be quite correct, would it, sir?"

"Oh, nonsense," he said "Where's the harm?"

"Well, sir," she spoke awkwardly, and a warmer colour came into her cheeks, "as a matter of fact, I could do with some extra cash now. You see . . . I expect to be married fairly soon."

"Congratulations. Who's the lucky man?"

"Alfred Baines, sir. He's steward on an Orient Line boat. He'll be home the month after next."

"Good for you, Jenny. Suppose you stay on for an hour, from five till six, twice a week. I could pay you five shillings a time, and if you didn't find the work too tiring I could give you a note to a friend of mine who teaches night classes at the Slade. He'd be glad to employ you for a short spell."

"He wouldn't expect, sir . . ." Jenny blushed crimson.

"Good heavens, no," Stephen said kindly. "You'd wear some sort of costume."

"Then I'd be very grateful to you, sir."

"Shall we call it a bargain?" He smiled, that rare smile that lit up his face so attractively, and held out his hand.

Still flushed, she came forward. Her small fingers were warm and dry in his. It was an extraordinarily pleasant little hand to hold, the pulse of her young body was in it, he barely brought himself to relinquish it. When he did so she turned towards the door. She was rather pale now, and not looking at him she said:

"You've always treated me so nice, Mr. Desmond, it's a pleasure to do things for you. And I've always given your room an extra polish because . . . well, just because it was you, sir." She broke off, and was gone.

Her words brought an odd warmth. But soon Stephen again became conscious of the dreariness which stretched ahead. He wished that Glyn might come soon. He detested the life he had been leading at the Settlement: the visiting, the Bible classes, the hypocrisy of feeding words to cold and hungry people, while he remained warm and well fed.

He could understand a man entering the Church who was by nature

deeply religious, who felt it his predestined mission to succour his fellow men.

But had he not his own vocation, a call which kept ringing in his heart? What a fool he had been

Just then heavy boots sounded on the wooden stairs, and a few seconds later a man some years older than Stephen burst into the room. He was of medium size and thickly built, with cropped red hair, a short bristling red beard and strong features. Dressed in moleskin trousers and a work man's jersey, a red spotted handkerchief knotted round his throat, he had the air of a buccancer, boisterous, full of a vigorous enjoyment of life

He pulled out a gun metal watch, attached to his person by a piece of frayed green picture cord

"Just under the hour," he remarked with satisfaction "Not bad, from Whitechapel"

"You walked all the way!"

"Ran," said Glyn "What a thirst it's given me. I don't suppose you've a spot of beer?"

"We're not allowed to have it in our rooms. I can give you tea and biscuits"

Glyn burst out laughing "How can you wrestle with Satan on biscuits and tea? But bring 'em on"

Stephen boiled a tin kettle on the gas ring and when the tea was brewed Richard drank four cups in an absent manner.

"Your exhibition has done well," Stephen said.

"Well enough," Glyn answered carelessly "The critiques were so perfectly bloody they actually brought people in"

"But you did sell something?"

"One ruddy canvas. However, the cash takes me out of hock. Anna and I are off to Paris tomorrow. I'll live cheap and work like the devil. Paris is a wonderful place for work." He shot a swift glance at the other.

"You still aren't coming along?"

"How can I?" Stephen muttered. "You know how I'm situated."

"I had the impression that you wanted to paint."

"Glyn . . . if I chucked everything . . . should I ever succeed as an artist?"

Glyn leaned forward, brows drawn down. "What a bloody idiotic

question. What do you mean by success? Don't you know that you can't get guarantees in this game? If you're serious you give up everything, starve, steal, cheat your grandmother, just to get your hands on a tube of colour and a palette knife. I believe you have talent, otherwise I shouldn't bother my head over you. I know how hard it is for you—bogged in tradition. You should have been like me, born in a workmen's row in a rotten colliery town. You must make your own decision, and if it's no, I daresay you'll make a passable parson." He tugged out the gun-metal watch. "Well, I have to cut along. Good-bye, Desmonde. Write me when you have time."

He gripped Stephen by the hand, and went out.

THE Oxford-Cambridge cricket match was over and a party of seven could be observed in the fashionable throng moving slowly towards the main gates. Caroline and Claire were in front with Davie Desmonde and his cousin Geoffrey, while Stephen followed with General Desmonde and his wife. Stephen had only come so that he might be with his brother, and Davie's enjoyment of the game had in some measure been his reward.

Now, as they left the grounds and stood together rather indecisively, the general's wife—Stephen rarely thought of her as Aunt Adelaide—spoke in her clipped "county" voice.

"Today has been so delightful it seems a pity to let it die prematurely." She turned to her husband.

General Desmonde surveyed the group. Tall, straight-featured, erect as a ramrod, even in his grey top-hat and morning coat he looked a soldier. "I thought we might all go to supper at Frascati's."

"I say, what a lark," Geoffrey said, adjusting his embroidered waistcoat. He was a smart, if somewhat brainless, young man about town.

"Davie must be back by seven," Caroline interposed. "And it's after six now. I must take him to the train."

"Darling, you are so kind." Adelaide smiled. She did not want Caroline at Frascati's, in that hideous maroon frock which made her look like a parlourmaid on her day off.

"I'm afraid I must get back, too," Stephen said. If Davie weren't going, he had no wish to be there.

"Surely you can stay, Stephen." Claire stood beside him, her soft com-

plexion shaded by a wide-brimmed hat trimmed with roses. Today, more than ever, in this setting, she looked what she was—a most amiable English girl whose good sense and pleasant cordiality made friends for her wherever she went.

"Darling," Adelaide cut in, "we mustn't interfere with rules and regulations. We four must make the best of it. Geoffrey will take you, Claire, and I shall pretend that Hubert is my beau." Adelaide had her own reasons for not wishing Stephen to be of the party.

Good-byes were exchanged; then, vaguely conscious of the regret in Claire's eyes, Stephen moved away with Caroline and Davie. He saw them on their way and settled himself in an eastbound omnibus. As he rattled towards Stepney, a slow depression settled upon him. How physically and spiritually different from the others he had felt during the promenade on the grounds, the meetings and greetings, the luncheon in the Guards Club Marquee.

In this mood he reached the Settlement. In the hall, redolent of boiled beef and cabbage, he saw that there were no letters for him in the rack and went upstairs. And there, seated in a hard chair in the centre of his room, weaving her outdoor clothes, a flat straw hat with a narrow ribbon, and white cotton gloves, was Jenny.

At his entrance she rose immediately and, while he gazed at her in surprise, she began "I apologize for the liberty, sir. But there was no other place to wait. I'm leaving today, rather unexpected like, and you've been so good to me I felt I had to say good bye."

"I'm sorry, Jenny. I didn't imagine you'd go so soon."

"Nor me neither, sir. But the truth is I'm found out."

"Found out?" he repeated, bewildered.

"Yes, sir." She nodded in her practical way, quite without embarrassment. "I didn't realize I was beginning to show. But there's no deceiving that cook. Yesterday, she ups to the Warden like a shot."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"Don't you see, sir, I'm going to have a baby."

He was utterly taken aback. At last, feeling that his position demanded some moral reflection, he stammered "Oh, Jenny . . . how could you?"

"We all have our feelings, sir. You can't get away from that. And Alf's a steady, respectable feller. We'll be married when he gets back."

"I suppose you're in love with him."

"I suppose I must be, sir." A faint, wise smile passed over her fresh young face. "He's a lot older than me, of course, but he's decent, is Alf. And accomplished too. He plays the harmonica."

"Well . . . we shall miss you, Jenny."

"I shall miss you, sir. I must say you've been more than kind. Not like some of the others. The Warden, he gave me a regular going over."

"So you're not leaving of your own accord?"

"Oh no, sir. The Warden couldn't have the place contaminated, he said, and sacked me on the spot. I only hope I haven't brought trouble on you. It's all come out about you getting me the job at the art class. And the Warden seemed terrible upset."

Stephen was disconcerted by this news. However, his genuine concern for Jenny, the admiration he felt for her courage, and his indignation at the treatment accorded her made him ignore himself. He tumbled in his wallet, then took a step towards her.

"Look, Jenny . . . I've no wish to offend you. But you've done so much for me here, and you really will need something to see you through."

Awkwardly he put in her hand a five pound note which he had folded small.

But to his surprise, she would not have it, she rose abruptly, and backed away.

"No, sir, I couldn't. What I done for you was nothing."

While she retreated and he followed, tendering the money, the door opened and the Warden came into the room. There was a mortal silence while he stood in stony observation. Then, in a controlled voice, he said: "You may go now, Dill."

As Jenny went out, with tears flashing hotly in her eyes, Stephen was calm enough to take advantage of her distress and press the note into the pocket of her jacket.

"Good-bye, Jenny," he murmured. "And the best of luck."

The Reverend Bliss closed the door behind her. "Desmonde," he said, "I surmised that your conduct had been indiscreet. But I never dreamed that it had gone as far as this."

Stephen swallowed the dry lump in his throat.

"I don't quite understand you."

"Come, come, Desmonde," said Bliss. "You cannot deny that you

have had that young person frequently with you, alone, in your room."

"Jenny came to do my room. And occasionally I made some sketches of her. I've tried to help her. That was all."

"So you thought it part of your duties, as a candidate for ordination, to make a model out of one of the servants of this house of God. I have made it my duty to examine some of the drawings and they strike me as questionable in the extreme. It appears that my standards of art as well as morality differ from your own."

"They certainly do." Stephen flung caution to the winds. "I should not have thrown that poor girl into the street."

"I daresay not." The Warden's nostrils narrowed and a scowl settled upon his forehead. "Although Dill has given a name to her guilty partner, I am not altogether convinced. It is my firm belief that, by the means which you utilized this unhappy girl for your so-called artistic ends, you are at least indirectly to blame for the state of depravity into which she has fallen."

Stephen burst out: "I never heard such rot. Jenny isn't depraved. Her sweetheart's going to marry her. Is it your idea of Christian charity to vilify her, and me, without cause?"

"Be silent, sir. I should ask you to leave the Settlement at once, but out of regard for your family I am disposed to be lenient. I must give your father some idea of what has occurred. And *you* will give *me* your written pledge to abandon this obsession you are pleased to call 'art,' which is wholly incompatible with your vocation as a clergyman. There will be some further restrictions. Come to my study after prayers." He swung round and went out of the room.

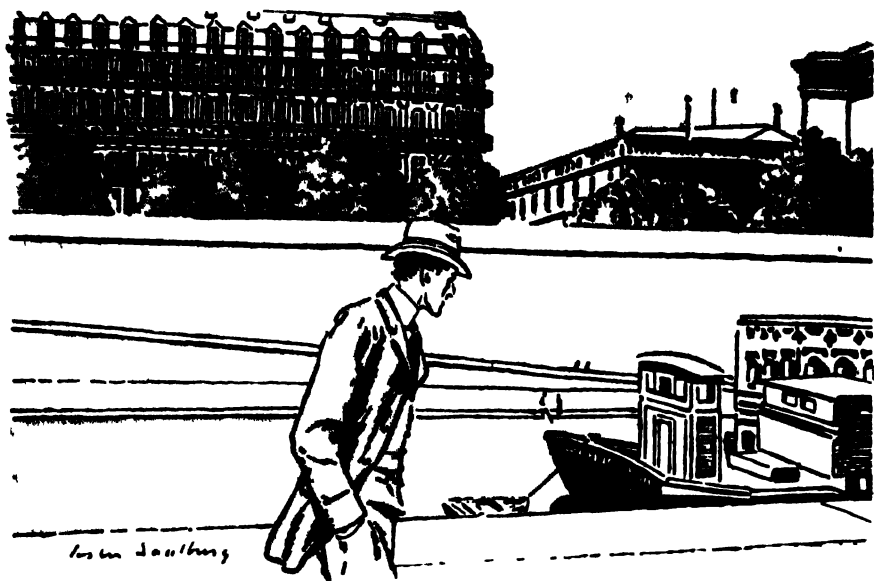
Desmonde stood tensely, with clenched fists. Then he sank into a chair by the table, drew writing-paper from the drawer and seized a pen.

Dear Father,

I have done my best here and made a complete failure of it. I do not wish to take any final decision against your wishes, but I feel that I must go away for a while—a year, at least—to test my abilities in that particular field which is so distasteful to you. I shall not even name it. I realize what a blow this will be to you, and my only excuse is—I simply cannot help myself.

My love to all at Stillwater and to Claire.

Stephen

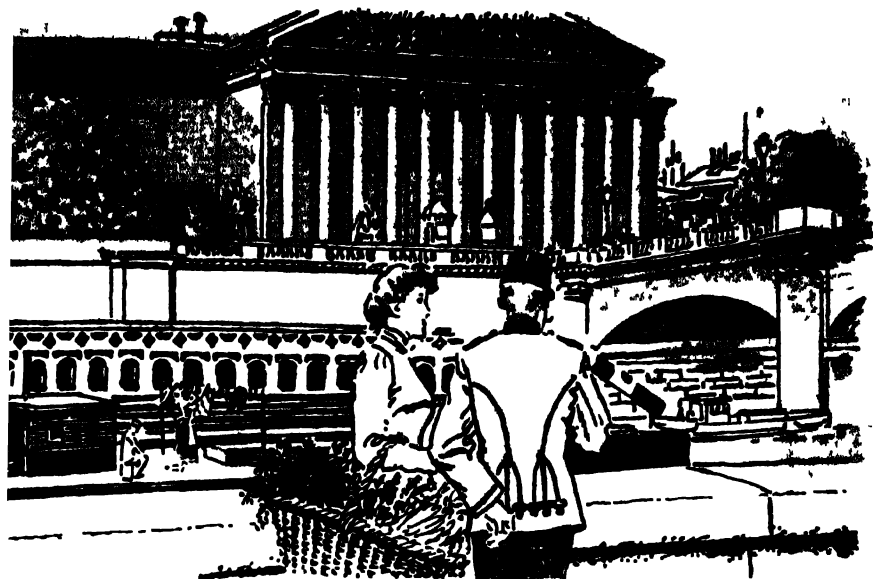


Chapter Three

PARIS was unknown to Stephen and, although its first heady breath exhilarated him like wine, he entered it nervously. His immediate thought had been of Glyn, but in that strained moment of parting he had forgotten to ask for his address. Thus he went to a hotel he had heard his father mention, the Clifton in the Rue de la Sourdière.

This quiet, near sepulchral place opened through a narrow entrance to a glassed in courtyard round which the rooms were arranged behind flaking cast-iron balconies. Stephen's room was darkish and fusty, with faded wallpaper and an enormous red curtained bed. He unpacked his valise, then, excitedly, left the hotel and walked at random along the Rue du Mont Thabor and through the Place de la Concorde to the Seine.

When he saw the long line of chestnut trees now in full foliage, by the river, he almost cried aloud. The Seine, steel-grey and polished, shimmered past a row of moored black barges. On one of these a plump breasted, yellow-haired young woman was stringing pink washing on a line. A little white dog capered at her ankles. A man in a jersey and



billycock hat smoked placidly, bare armed, on an upturned bucket.

In a kind of singing rapture Stephen slowly walked on. Only when the light faded did he start back towards his hotel. Now the city was stirring from its Sunday torpor. The little corner cafés had begun to fill up. Middle class families began to take the air. Outside a baker's shop, not yet unshuttered, housewives were gathering to buy bread. I am in Paris, thought Stephen giddily, at last, at last.

Next morning, he set out for Montparnasse, having resolved to enrol in the renowned academy of Professor Dupret, in the Boulevard Seline.

The studio occupied the top floor of a queer barrack of a building that had once been an armoury. The large, light room, heated by a huge Dutch stove, was crowded with perhaps fifty students, for the most part young men, of many nationalities—bearded Slavs, a dark-skinned Indian, blond Scandinavians, several young Americans.

The din was deafening—a continuous babble of conversation and loud snatches of song. Entering hesitantly, Stephen found a stool and set up his portfolio upon his knee. The model, an old man, was seated upon the central platform, leaning forward slightly, chin resting upon the back of his hand. Taking his charcoal, Stephen set to work.

At eleven o'clock Monsieur Dupret appeared—a handsome, erect man of about sixty whose tight-fitting frock coat gave him a distinguished air, intensified by the ribbon in his buttonhole. Noise ceased with his entry and he began to make a tour of the room, pausing here and there to scrutinize a canvas with narrowed eyes, to utter a few curt words, rather like a surgeon making the round of his wards. To Stephen the Professor said nothing whatsoever. He glanced at his drawing, and the next moment, without the flicker of an eyebrow, he was gone.

At one o'clock a bell rang. Immediately a yell went up, the model shuffled off the platform, the students began piling towards the door. Suddenly, at his elbow, Stephen heard a pleasant voice.

"You're English, aren't you? I noticed you come in. My name's Chester."

Stephen turned his head and discovered a good-looking young man with an air of frank and engaging charm smiling down at him. Chester offered his hand. "I hope you don't mind my speaking to you. In this rabble we fellows from across the Channel ought to hang together. How about lunching with me?"

They set off together along the boulevard.

The restaurant they entered was a narrow low-ceilinged cellar, opening into a dark little kitchen with a charcoal fire and roasting spit, filled by the clatter of copper pans and an agreeable aroma of cooking. Already the place was crowded, mainly by Dupret students, but Chester led the way through to a little yard adorned by tubs of privet and, calmly removing the card marked "Reserved" from a table, invited Stephen to be seated.

Immediately a stout, red-faced woman in black bustled out of the kitchen to protest. "No, no, Monsieur Harry . . . this place is reserved for Monsieur Lambert."

"Do not agitate yourself, Madame Chobert." Chester smiled. "You know Monsieur Lambert is my good friend."

Madame Chobert grumbled briefly, then, with a shrug, raised the slate which hung from her waist and offered the menu chalked upon it for their inspection.

During the meal Chester kept up a lively flow of talk, commenting upon their neighbours, sounding out Stephen with a few pleasant questions and revealing, with a deprecating smile, that his father had been a

prominent tea planter in Ceylon, that his mother, now a widow, spoiled him with a generous allowance. He had been in Paris eighteen months. "It's tremendous fun," he concluded. "You must let me show you the ropes."

Stephen told him about himself, meanwhile studying his companion. Chester puzzled him, as he might be puzzled by an unfamiliar design.

They had finished their coffee, and people were beginning to leave. "Your friend Lambert doesn't seem to be coming," Stephen said.

Chester laughed. "Philip's an erratic beggar. You never know when he'll turn up—or with what attractive petticoat."

"Does he attend Dupret's?"

"He works at home, when he *does* work. He has private means, and he and his wife have rented a little apartment near the Esplanade des Invalides—it up. Here's Philip now."

Stephen saw a slight, affected-looking man of about thirty, dressed in a short brown topcoat with a low collar and a flowing tie. His pale face was deeply shadowed beneath the eyes. His glossy black hair was parted neatly in the middle, but on one side a lock fell in a little curl over his forehead. In general he conveyed the impression of indolence, boredom and conceit. He came over, peeling off a lemon-yellow glove and contemplating Chester with slightly contemptuous amusement. "Thank you for keeping my table de u boy. But now you must clear out. I'm expecting a guest and I shan't need a chaperon."

"We're just going, Philip." Chester's tone had taken on a submissive inflection. "Look here, I'd like you to meet Desmonde. He joined us at Dupret's today. Desmonde just came down from Oxford last term."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lambert. "Which college, may I ask?"

"Trinity," said Stephen.

"Ah!" Lambert relaxed into a smile. "I am happy to meet you. I myself was there. Do come to tea at my house one day. We are at home most Wednesdays. Harry will bring you along."

The bill, presented by Madame Chobert, lay upon the table. Since Chester did not appear to see it, Stephen picked it up and, despite Harry's sudden and energetic protests, paid.

UNDER the spell of his new freedom, Stephen fell into a most agreeable routine, the more so since a letter had arrived from the Rector which

greatly relieved his mind. Obviously, his father wrote, Stephen's inclination was too strong to be resisted. It might therefore be "all for the best" if this interim of a year be regarded on both sides as a "proving ground."

Every morning Stephen rose, dressed quickly, and went out to a little restaurant round the corner from the hotel where he was served a jug of steaming coffee and two flaky *croissants* still warm from the oven. His walk to Professor Dupret's studio was always a delight. The early housewives with arms crooked on laden baskets; a Zouave soldier in scarlet trousers; an old street cleaner sending a swirl of water along the gutter, the chime of bells; the lovely river, sparkling in the sun, all this entranced him.

At the studio, he did not yet feel at home. It seemed as if in any of the students had come for sheer diversion. They laughed and sang, played rough practical jokes, affected an exaggerated bohemianism.

Professor Dupret's attitude towards Stephen remained impassive, although once or twice, after studying some piece of work, he glanced at him in a curious manner, almost as though seeing him for the first time.

More and more, Stephen began to discern that Dupret had no real interest in his students except when, with a stab of jealousy, he came upon evidence of a talent that might surpass his own. To have won recognition in official circles, to exhibit annually at the Salon a safe, carefully executed picture, to sit upon boards and committees—did these distinctions mean anything to one whose youthful ambition had been to rock the world with a tremendous masterpiece? Dupret was a hollow man.

At lunchtime Stephen usually went with Chester to Madame Chobert's, but occasionally he wandered alone along the quays, munching a roll with a slice of ham, then sped to the museums, to the Louvre or the Luxembourg. It would be almost dark when he left the long galleries and walked back to the Clifton.

To CHESTER it seemed extraordinary that Stephen should spend so many hours alone and several times he pressed him to visit the Lamberts with him. One Wednesday, Stephen accepted and towards four o'clock he set off for Harry's lodging. After a sharp climb of three flights of stairs, he became aware of a loud altercation, and pushing through the half-open door he found Chester arguing with a short man in a square

black hat and drab overcoat who was busily engaged in stowing into a capacious burlap bag the mantel clock and other articles which decorated the room.

"Now if you please, your watch, Monsieur Chester."

"Oh, hang it all, Maurice," Chester pleaded, "not the watch. Not this time. Give me to the end of the week."

At this point Chester saw Stephen. For a moment he looked foolish, then he forced a confident smile. "Isn't it idiotic, Desmonde? I've just run over my allowance. And this wretched dun is stripping me. It's practically nothing. A couple of hundred francs . . . if you could by any chance . . ."

"I'll be glad to oblige you."

"Thanks awfully, old man. You shall have it back, with interest, the first of the next month. Here you are, Maurice, you thief!"

The bailiff counted the notes twice with a moist thumb, nodded silently, emptied the contents of the bag upon the table, and, with an enigmatic bow, slid out of the room.

With his good humour quite restored, Chester led the way down stairs, talking and laughing all the way to the Lamberts' apartment, which turned out to be small, dim and artistic. They were early, and Lambert, drowsing by the fire, barely lifted one heavy eyelid as they came in. But Mrs. Lambert, a tall, rather sharp featured woman with large green eyes, welcomed them and presently brought in tea on a silver tray. Lambert yawned and stretched then. He gazed at Stephen.

"Well, what have you been doing with yourself in this naughty city, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

Stephen reddened. Seeing that Chester had been talking about him, he explained the circumstances of his coming to Paris.

"Bravo, Abbé," Lambert exclaimed.

And Elise, with a fluttering smile, murmured, "You must have wanted terribly to paint. Now have some more tea."

As Stephen rose to hand over his cup his eye was caught by three paintings arranged upon the wall. He paused, struck by the delicacy of the work. The paintings were small and slight in subject—a spray of cherry blossoms in a blue bowl, two willow trees overhanging a stagnant pool—yet each had a decorative prettiness that enhanced the mere design.

"These are delightful," Stephen said.

Lambert pretended to shrug, but he was clearly gratified. "As a matter of fact, dear Abbé, they are my work," he said.

His wife, reaching out vivaciously, pressed Stephen's hand. "Phil does portraits too." Her green eyes lingered brightly. "If anyone you know should be interested in buying . . . I am the business partner."

After this a number of other guests arrived, all singularly appropriate to this atmosphere of refined bohemianism. Fresh tea was brought, Lambert poured whisky, the sound of conversation deepened, and presently Stephen rose to go. Mrs. Lambert accompanied him to the door. "Come picnicking with us up the river on Sunday," she said. "Philip has really taken to you."

On Sunday then, and on other days thereafter, Stephen accompanied the Lamberts and their friends to those lovely reaches of the Seine between Châtillon and Melun. They took the *bateau mouche*, the river boat, from the Pont Neuf to Ablon, where they hired a skiff and pulled with leisurely strokes against the slow green stream until, mooring at some riverside inn, they disembarked to lunch in the open air.

The sparkling sunshine, the flowers in bloom, the exercise, these congenial friends, the hoot of a barge, the colour of a workman's blouse all awoke in Stephen a quivering ecstasy. Above all, the belief that he had found himself in the artistic life acted like a drug on him. At first he brought a sketch-book with him, longing to make a record of everything he saw, but Lambert discouraged him with a whimsical smile.

"You must store it all here, dear Abbé." He tapped his forehead. "Later on, in solitude, it will be born again."

ONE Sunday evening, after an excursion with the Lamberts, Stephen took leave of them and set out from the landing stage for his hotel. How well he felt! . . . Skin scorched by the sun, lungs full of country air . . . a kind of godlike satisfaction suffused him.

As he crossed the street a man stepped out of a narrow entry just ahead of him. He looked like a labourer, yet something in the set of the shoulders, the defiant carriage of the head made Stephen start. He hurried forward. "Glyn."

Richard Glyn swung round. "It's you, Desmonde. So you got over."

"Five weeks ago. And I've been hoping I'd run into you ever since. Do come and have dinner with me."

"I'd be glad of a bite. I've had nothing to eat all day."

"Good heavens, what have you been doing?"

"Painting," Glyn answered, with a kind of gloomy violence. "I'm apt to forget about lunch when I'm working." Taking Stephen's arm, he set out with him along the street.

Glyn's appearance, in red neckerchief and hobnail boots, caused a mild shocked stir in the Clifton dining room. Richard, however, did not seem to mind and glanced round with curiosity.

"Why in heaven's name do you stay in a place like this, Desmond? Some evening I'll take you to a real eating house."

"Madame Chobert's."

"Lord, no! Not that artistic hash shop! Now tell me what you've been up to."

Enthusiastic Stephen spoke of his morning "grind" at Dupret's, of his friendship with Chester and the Lamberts, of their expeditions. At first Glyn listened with a half-indulgent smile, but gradually his expression turned serious.

"Well!" he exclaimed. "You seem to have been busy. Perhaps you'll take me up to your room and we'll see what you've done."

"Oh, I haven't much to show you," Stephen answered. "Only a few sketches. I've been concentrating on line, you see."

"I see," said Glyn. From beneath knitted brows, he turned upon Stephen a steady gaze of extreme disfavour.

"Desmond," he said. "Do you want to paint? Or fool your life away like one of these fancy characters in *La Boheme*?"

"I don't understand."

"Listen then. There are perhaps ten thousand impostors in this town who imagine they are artists because they study a little, sketch a little, and sit in the cafes all night gabbing. You're almost one of them. You're wasting your time, Desmond. Painting means work, work and still more work. Not drifting down the Seine in a skiff with some half-baked poseurs."

Stephen flushed indignantly.

"You're unjust, Glyn. Lambert certainly has talent."

"What has he done? Some little things, fragments . . . oh, pretty enough, I grant you, but he'd never be heard of if he weren't pushed by his wife. You have something that Lambert would give his soul to

possess. I don't want to see you chuck it away. As for Harry Chester, how much has he sponged off you?"

Stephen's flush deepened. Chester now owed him more than five hundred francs.

"I tell you, Desmonde," Glyn went on more quietly, "you've landed in bad company and, worst of all, you've been slacking. The lowest pit in hell is occupied by the artist who does not work!"

A slow shame spread over Stephen. "What am I to do?" he said

"First of all, get out of this Anglican rest home. Now, I can't ask you to stay with us. But my friend Papa Pevrat will be glad to have you share expenses. He's a queer old fish but a real painter, different from your fake bohemians. You're finished with Dupret, of course. You can use my studio."

There was an overwhelming force in Glyn's arguments. Stephen went to the office and settled his bill. He then packed his bag and had it brought downstairs, atoning for the unexpectedness of his departure by an indiscriminate distribution of gratuities.

Glyn, standing by in the passage, was chilly towards this tipping, and commented, "I advise you to hang on to your cash, Desmonde. You may need it before you're through. Come along."

"Wait, Glyn. They'll have to get us a cab."

"Are you too weak to walk?" Richard swung the heavy suitcase on to his shoulder and, followed by Stephen, strode out of the hotel.

It was a considerable distance to Pevrat's lodging, but finally, in a dark little side street on the Left Bank, Glyn turned into a crooked entrance next to a pastrycook's shop and began ascending the stone stairs three at a time. On the second floor he paused, knocked on the door, then turned the handle and led Stephen into a living room, furnished with bourgeois neatness.

At an oilcloth-covered table sat a slight, round shouldered man of about fifty, with a furrowed face and an untrimmed beard, who wore, despite the warmth of a stove in full blast, a dilapidated black overcoat turned up at the collar and a hard black hat. While a caged thrush with half its feathers gone piped an accompaniment, he played softly on the ocarina. At the sight of Glyn his clear, audacious eyes lighted up. He put down the instrument and, rising, kissed Richard with affectionate formality upon both cheeks.

"Peyrat," said Glyn, "I've brought you your new lodger. He's a friend of mine. Stephen Desmonde."

"If he is your friend, *mon vieux*, then he will be mine. Forgive me for receiving you like this, Monsieur Desmonde. Richard knows how subject I am to draughts."

"I hope we are not disturbing you," Stephen said awkwardly.

"Far from it. In the evenings I am in the habit of contemplating my soul. Sometimes I find it splendid, sometimes hideous. Tonight," he smiled, "I welcome any distraction."

"Desmonde is a painter, Peyrat. He's going to work with us."

"Good," Peyrat said. "I make you welcome. Here we renounce the beauty of women and the brilliance of contemporary fame in order to produce masterpieces that will be acclaimed a thousand years after we are dead."

"What a hope!" exclaimed Glyn with ironic indulgence.

"It is that hope which alone keeps us alive."

"What about the blessed Thérèse?"

"Ah, yes. Truly, one is sustained by the example of that noble soul." He turned to Stephen. "Have you visited Spain?"

"No."

"Then some day we may make a pilgrimage together. To Ávila de los Caballeros, her birthplace."

Glyn burst out laughing. "I warn you, Desmonde. This madman, who never goes to church, has an absurd veneration for Sainte Thérèse."

Peyrat shook his head in reproof. "My friend, do not take in vain the name of that sweet and obstinate woman from Old Castile, who restored the original discoloured order, that had been abandoned in the easy, gossiping life of the Carmelites. She fought her campaign with charm, humility, prayer and argument. She was a poet, too. . . ."

"I'll leave you to get acquainted," Glyn said with a grin. "Be at my studio at seven tomorrow, Desmonde. Good night."

He went out. Peyrat held out his hand to Stephen.

He said simply, "I hope you will be at home here."

JEROME PEYRAT, known all over the Plaisance district as "Papa Peyrat," was of humble origin. His parents, of whom he spoke with pride, had been simple country people working a small farm near Nantes. For

thirty years, as a government clerk, his days had been passed making entries in dusty ledgers at the Palais de Justice. Once, as clerk to a judicial commission, he had gone to India, and there he had spent all his leisure watching the animals in the Calcutta Zoo. Some months after his return he was retired with a minute pension. Then, never having manifested the faintest interest in art, he began not only to paint but to regard himself as a painter of genius. He had never had a lesson in his life. He painted portraits of his friends, streets, ugly buildings, wedding groups. He painted jungle compositions—a naked female form bestriding a snarling tiger amid a tangled undergrowth of palms, creepers, fern fronds, orchids, an imaginative forest, lush and stupendous, peopled by snakes and climbing apes.

These pictures were displayed for sale at fifteen francs each in the window of his friend Madame Huffnaegel, who kept the millinery shop a few doors down. Except for Napoleon Campo, a colourman, who had taken canvases from Peyrat in payment for materials, and whose attic admittedly was stored with junk from struggling artists—no one bought the pictures, which became to his neighbours a subject of hilarious if affectionate mirth. Yet Peyrat went on painting, eking out his meagre pension by various devices. With some knowledge of music, he gave harmonica lessons to children and in the summer he played the French horn every Thursday afternoon in the orchestra which charmed the nursemaids and their charges in the Tuileries Gardens. And when necessity pressed too hard there was always the friend of his boyhood, Alphonse Bisque, the pastrycook, who could be relied upon to provide a meat pâté or a mutton pie.

Early though Stephen rose, Peyrat was up before him to take in the milk and new-baked bread which Alphonse's small boy delivered. Their simple breakfast over, he would wash the dishes; then, having fed the thrush, which he had found lame in the street and proposed to release when its wing had mended, he shouldered his easel and paintbox and set off on foot to some remote suburb, where he lost himself in projecting upon canvas some celestial vision of a railway siding or a chimney stack.

Stephen set out at the same hour for Glyn's studio, hurrying to utilize the clear north light.

Glyn's wife, Anna, who was also his model, was a woman of thirty, tall and vigorous, with black hair and a gaunt, gypsy look. The planes

of her face, with its high cheekbones, were flat and strong. Moving about the studio in her felt slippers, she was the most silent person Stephen had ever known. She would pose for long periods at a stretch, then without a word would slip out to the Halles and, returning with an armful of provisions, go over to the tiny stove to make a meal.

Glyn was incessant in his demand for originality, insisting that Stephen look at objects, not as they were represented by tradition, but with his own eyes. "Do as Peyrat does! Make every painting absolutely your own."

"You think highly of Peyrat?"

"I think he's great." Glyn spoke with conviction. "He has the direct vision of the primitive artist. They may laugh now but in twenty years they'll be scrambling for his stuff."

It was hard work and cold. The studio was frigid. Gone for ever was Stephen's earlier idea that painting was a soft, seductive art. Glyn was insatiable in his demand for ever greater effort. One day, when Stephen felt he could go on no longer, Richard threw down his palette.

"Exercise," he declared. "The top of my head's coming off. Can you use a bicycle?"

"Of course."

They left the studio and crossed the street to the bicycle shop kept by Pierre Berthelot, an old racing cyclist now incapacitated by a drink damaged heart. It was a small, broken down establishment with a row of bicycles strung up to the ceiling.

"Pierre!" Glyn shouted, rapping on the counter.

A girl of about nineteen appeared from the back. She was rather short, wore a black sweater and black pleated skirt, her feet in black slippers.

"It's you," said Glyn. "Why aren't you with the circus?"

"Laid up for the winter." She spoke ungraciously, hands on her hips, legs planted apart.

"Where's your papa?"

"Sleeping it off."

"Stephen, this is Emmy Berthelot." As she looked from one to the other in a bored manner he went on, "We want two machines for the afternoon. Good ones, now."

"They're all good. Take the two at the end."

Glyn lowered the pulley ropes and Stephen watched her as she caught

each machine in turn and spun the wheels expertly. She had a pale, sulky face, well-marked eyebrows, a wide, thin-lipped mouth. Her nose had a slum-quarter tilt at the tip. Except for her breasts, conspicuous under the tight sweater, she had the figure of a well-developed boy. Turning unexpectedly she caught Stephen's eyes on her. Under her cool appraising stare he felt himself reddening. Richard was wheeling the cycles to the door.

"Like to come, Emmy?"

"Got to watch the shop. Thanks to that old soak."

"Another time then. We'll be back before dark."

Stephen followed Glyn out to the street. They mounted and, bent double over the downswept handle-bars, moved off through the traffic. Outside the city gates Richard set a blinding pace. At last, after about thirty kilometres, he drew up sharp at a bar in the little village of Louveciennes. He looked critically at Stephen, dusty and sweaty, completely winded.

"Not bad, my boy. You don't like to give up, do you? It's a quality that may serve you. Come in and have a beer."

In the dark, low-ceilinged bar they each had a delicious cool bock. Glyn sucked the froth from his beard and sighed. "Good painting country, this. Renoir and Pissarro used to hang out here. But we'll push farther out next time. We'll get Emmy to set the pace. She can really go."

The recollection of the encounter in the bicycle shop still rankled with Stephen. He said stiffly:

"That young woman struck me as rather disagreeable."

Glyn gave a shout of laughter. "Moderate your language, *padrú*. As a matter of fact, she is a cheap, tough little slut. Tours six months of the year with the Peroz circus. Does a risky trick cycling act and gets high billing. She has no use for us, really, knows we don't make a bean. But she's incredibly vain, and wants me to paint her."

"Will you?"

"Not on your life. I don't deal in gutter types." He finished his beer. "Come on."

They rode back slowly in the cool of the evening. Glyn was in great spirits, purged of his nervous tension. Outside the bicycle shop he looked at his watch and whistled.

"I have to meet Anna. Take this in for me like a good chap." He turned over his machine to Stephen and rushed off.

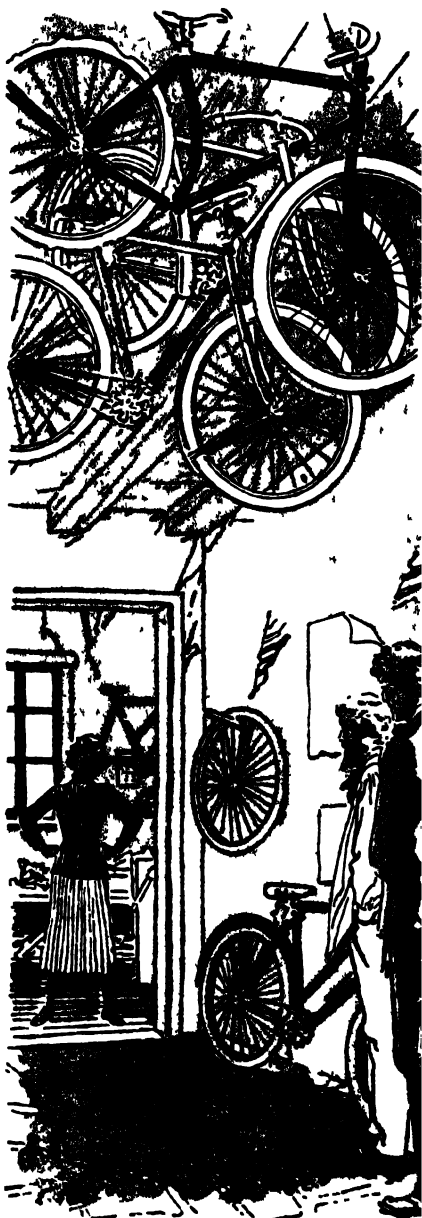
Stephen manœuvred the two cycles into the shop. He knocked on the counter; then, as no one appeared, he pushed through the door that led to the back premises and in a dark little passage bumped into Emmy. He could find nothing to say, and all at once his pulse began to beat like a hammer. She stood close to him, watching him coolly through knowing, narrowed eyes as though his inner turmoil were perfectly apparent to her.

"What do you want?"

He heard the quick loud bumping of his heart. In an unnatural voice he answered. "I've brought back the machines."

She was making no attempt to move. At last he forced his hand to the door behind him and thrust it open. "I hope," he stammered like a schoolboy, "I hope I shall see you again."

He tried to dismiss her from his mind, but she grew upon him every time he saw her. With the coming of the spring, Glyn insisted on regular weekly rides and she accompanied them. She attracted and at the same time repelled Stephen. He longed to ask her to sit for him, but the opportunity seemed never to arise. She remained an unsolved puzzle, a **strange irritant.**



And time was passing. As the chestnuts broke into bloom again, he realized that his year of grace would soon be up. More and more the letters from home began to anticipate his return.

July came, and from brassy skies a stifling air pressed down upon the city. Glyn, who hated hot weather, suddenly decided to go to Brittany. Even Peyrat spoke of deserting Paris for a visit to an uncle in Auvergne. Both of them pressed Stephen to accompany them. But he could not accept—a severe letter had arrived from the Rector in which he hoped that Stephen would not allow himself to be detained by “the gaities and distractions of Paris.”

After he had read it, Stephen went back to work. But suddenly he threw down his brushes. He was dripping with perspiration. “What a life!” he thought. “And Father thinks my days are a round of pleasure!”

He went out to the Plaisance post office and sent a telegram.

DESMONDE, THE RECTORY, STILLWATER, SUSSEX CROSSING MORNING
BOAT TOMORROW JULY 19TH. STEPHEN



Chapter Four

NOTHING, thought Stephen, exceeds the joy of revisiting loved, familiar places. Stretched on the grassy bank of Chillingham Lake, a fishing-rod beside him, he was watching Davie cast a silver minnow among the flowering lily-pads. The air was clear and golden, the trees in fullest foliage; dog roses and meadowsweet breathed out their perfume.

Yes, it was good to be back—if only they would not treat him like the returned prodigal who must at all costs be secured by kindness: his favourite dishes at lunch and dinner, Mould bringing in baskets of the choicest fruit. The subject of his painting had not been discussed since that first evening when, at the Rector's request, he had displayed his canvases. His father had striven vainly to approve Stephen's work, his bewildered eye coming to rest upon a scene which portrayed a woman pegging a string of washing on a windy day.

“My dear boy, why, of all things, should you paint a clothes-line?”

“It's the interplay of brilliant tones against the drab background.”

He had tried to explain how the raw colours were put on with a palette knife. Yet it was plain the Rector remained unconvinced. At last, after a final survey, his father turned doubtfully towards him.

"I suppose an expert might appreciate this."

"I think he might."

Thereafter consideration had, on all sides, supplanted criticism; and this afternoon Claire's mother, Lady Broughton, had invited Stephen and Davie for tea. With a glance at the sun, now slanting across the crest of the Downs, Stephen judged they had better be off. He strolled along the bank and stood behind his brother, whose catch, so far, had been a poor one—three small yellow perch. He wished that a large and worthy pike might impale itself upon the hook. Davie, he reflected sadly, never had any luck. And as his young brother reeled in his line Stephen put his arm about his shoulders and praised the three small fishes now curled dryly in the basket.

"Do you think they'll make good eating?" Davie asked hopefully.

"The smaller the sweeter," said Stephen.

They set off through the meadows, climbed the iron rail that fenced the park, and presently reached the Court, a massive pile of red sandstone.

Stephen had always liked Lady Broughton, and now, when she received them reclining on a chaise longue, asking to be excused because her doctor was being ridiculously severe with her, it pained him to observe the quick catch in her breathing, the faint purplish tinge in her cheeks.

Almost at once Claire entered, bareheaded, in a linen dress that matched the red gold in her hair.

"Claire." Stephen went towards her.

"It's so good to see you. And you, Davie." She smiled. To see Stephen again, to feel the touch of his fingers upon hers tested her composure more than she could have believed.

Just then tea was brought in, a regular schoolboy spread of boiled eggs and crumpets, sandwiches and johnny-cakes, with strawberries and whipped Sussex cream.

"We thought you'd be hungry after your fishing," said Claire, looking at Davie.

"We are," he affirmed enthusiastically.

Everyone laughed, and after that they were a merry party. Davie entered into a lively discussion with Claire upon the methods of catching pike. They finally agreed that on such a day as this a may fly would have far surpassed a silver minnow.

"I believe there are some flies in the billiard room," Claire reflected, after tea. "Come along and we'll take a look."

When they had gone, Lady Broughton gazed meditatively at Stephen. It did not in the least distress her that he had given up the Church—she considered him not cut out to be a country parson. Nor did his recent artistic adventures cause her uneasiness. These she regarded merely as a passing fancy which in no way detracted from the essential fineness of his character. Her knowledge of Claire's feelings for him made her wish to say something which might bring the matter to a head. Recently Geoffrey Desmonde had been a persistent visitor and Lady Broughton regarded him as a spoiled, conceited and affected young fop.

She said, "Claire and your cousin Geoffrey are very often together. He took her to Brooklands the other day for the motor racing."

"I didn't know Claire cared for that sort of thing."

"I don't think she does. I do worry about her a little, Stephen. To be happy she needs the right kind of companionship—shall I go further, and say the right kind of husband? I needn't tell you that I shan't be here for ever. And although she loves this place, there are many responsibilities. . . ."

She had said nothing definite, yet there was no mistaking her intention. Before he could speak, she resumed: "I think you were wise to have that spell in Paris. In my day young men always made the Grand Tour. They came back, settled down as good landlords and raised families. That precisely is what you ought to do, dear Stephen."

"But supposing . . ." He avoided her gaze. "Supposing I felt I ought to go abroad again, to continue painting?"

She shook her head, indulgently patted his hand.

"My dear boy, when I was young and romantic I thought I could write poetry. I got over it, however. And so will you."

Before Stephen could answer Davie re-entered the room with Claire, carrying a japanned metal box. "Look, Stephen, Claire has given me all these lovely flies."

"Don't forget," Claire smiled, "we shall expect lots of fish."

Stephen stood up in preparation for departure, touched by the quiet thoughtfulness apparent in Claire's every word and gesture. The last glimmer of the afternoon gilded the long pillared room. Through the windows were the exquisite lawns, the beech woods with red roofs of cottages above, and beyond, rolling away like the sea, the green Downs.

On the way home, Davie said: "It is jolly at the Court. Don't you wish we could be there oftener?"

But Stephen gave no answer.

ON THE following Thursday, luncheon at the Rectory was almost over. It had been a somewhat oppressive meal, for Davie was returning to school that afternoon. And Stephen was conscious of an intensification of that intangible coercion which had been brought to bear upon him during the last two weeks.

The Rector finished his coffee and, with his gaze on no one in particular, remarked "It happens that Mr Munsey Peters is in the neighbourhood. I have asked him to call this afternoon. You know Mr. Peters, Stephen?"

Inattentive, carving a face for Davie on a strip of orange peel, Stephen now looked up. "He is a well known member of the Royal Academy."

There was a pause. Stephen waited for Bertram to spring the trap.

"We thought he might care to see your pictures."

There was a silence which Caroline broke hurriedly.

"Isn't that fortunate, Stephen? Now you can have the benefit of his advice."

"He is in the first rank," said Bertram "You don't mind if we show him your paintings? Since the opportunity has arisen it might be wise to have his opinion."

Stephen had gone quite white. "Show him anything you like. His opinion is valueless."

"What! Munsey Peters is famous."

"What does that mean? Anything more vulgar and stupid than his pictures I can't imagine. . . ." He broke off, sensing that they would think him envious. Then, through the window, he saw the station cab draw up at the front door. A man in a broad-brimmed black hat and a black Inverness cape descended briskly and rang the bell. Bertram rose and, followed by his wife and Caroline, went into the hall. Stephen

remained seated. It was obvious now that Peters, commissioned at a fee, had come specially from London, like a surgeon called to see a patient dangerously ill.

A reassuring touch on his shoulder recalled him. It was Davie.

"Hadh't we better go in now? Don't worry, Stephen, I'll bet you come out on top."

IN THE drawing-room, Munsey Peters, plump, briskly officious, was seated on the sofa, coffee cup on knee. As Stephen entered he extended an amiable hand. Stephen told himself that he must entertain no rancour towards this unwelcome visitor who no doubt was acting in good faith. Yet knowing Peters's work, those woolly landscapes, he could not repress an instinctive aversion, enhanced by the man's smug appearance.

"So you've been in Patee, eh?" Peters said agreeably.

"Yes, just under a year."

"Working hard, I hope, in the gay city." This with a glance of veiled humour towards the others. "Who did you study under?"

"In the beginning—Dupret."

"Ah! What does he think of you?"

"I really don't know. I left him after a few weeks."

"Tut, tut! That was a mistake. D'you mean you've been mostly on your own? You can't have picked up much that way."

"At least I have learned how much will-power, discipline and intense application are necessary to make a good artist."

"Humph! That's all very fine. But what about being taught? There are certain essentials. I've stressed them in my book. I daresay you've studied it."

"I'm afraid not."

Mrs. Desmonde, for once tactful, said to Peters, "Let me give you more coffee."

"No, thank you. I am pressed for time. I have kept my cab waiting. Shall we proceed to the serious business of the day?"

"By all means." Bertram gave a sign to Davie, who left the room. Almost at once he returned, carrying the first picture, a view of the Seine at Passy, which he set up against a high-backed chair placed opposite the sofa.

Munsey Peters adjusted his pince-nez. He studied the painting



intently, and at length made a gesture to Davie, who placed it by the window and brought in the next. For Stephen, standing in the background with a painfully thudding heart, it was an excruciating experience. He looked round the domestic circle—his father, seated stiffly erect with finger tips pressed together; Caroline, on a low stool by the sofa, a frown of concern furrowing her brow; his mother, dreamily comfortable on a love seat, perfectly detached, and Davie, eyes shining, full of confidence that his brother would be justified.

It was over at last, the final picture shown. Munsey Peters made a further survey of the paintings ranged against the oval sill of the bay window. Time and again, his eye came back to the bold contrasts and vivid colours of the canvas depicting the woman at her clothes-line. In the end he let fall his pince-nez and took his stance on the hearthrug.

Bertram drew a sharp breath. "Has my son any chance of becoming a painter of the first rank?"

"None."

There was a dead silence. The Rector bowed his head. Stephen, with the shadow of a smile, looked straight at Munsey Peters.

"I have gathered that you want the truth," Peters resumed. "These canvases have, perhaps, a certain crude vitality, but they completely ignore our great traditions of painting, traditions of propriety and restraint. Your son may wish to continue this as a hobby. But professionally . . . ah, my dear sir, painting is a cruel art. It has no place for failures."

Compassionately, Bertram stole a glance at his son as though expecting him to offer some defence. But Stephen kept silent.

"And now, if you will excuse me," said Peters, bowing.

The Rector got to his feet. "We are very grateful to you . . . even though your verdict has been unfavourable."

Again Munsey Peters bowed and, accompanied by the Rector, left the room. Presently came the sound of a wheezy vehicle.

To spare the others embarrassment, Stephen went outside. There, pacing up and down, bareheaded, was his father. Bertram took his son's arm sympathetically. "I have to go to the vestry. Will you walk with me?" As they went up the lane Bertram continued, "Stephen, that was painful for all of us. But it was imperative for me to know the truth. I hope you do not reproach me."

"Of course not."

They reached the church and, pausing in the chancel, outside the vestry door, Bertram rested his hand upon the effigy of the crusader ancestor and faced his son.

"At least there is nothing now to prevent your returning to take orders. Your true place is here, Stephen."

"I'm afraid you don't understand. I am not giving up my painting. I have made up my mind to devote my life to art."

"But you've just had Peters's utterly damning opinion."

"That nonentity! The fact that he vilified my work was the highest compliment he could pay it."

"Are you mad?" Anger and dismay brought the blood to Bertram's brow. "To any normal person the evidence is plain. You must accept it."

"I have no right to my own life."

"Not if you are bent on ruining it. I have devoted to your education an amount of capital which I could barely afford. I had hoped all along that this step would be unnecessary. Nevertheless, for your own sake and mine I must bring you to your senses. Your allowance is stopped, as from this hour."

Stephen's gaze dwelt for a moment upon the stone effigy of his ancestor, who, in the half-light, seemed to smile cynically at him. He sighed. "Well, Father, that would appear to settle it."

For the remainder of the afternoon Stephen was a model of complaisance, heartening the others by his liveliness and good spirits. At six o'clock he insisted on driving with Davie to the train, sped him on his way with cheerful affection. Then, he went to the cab rank, where the taxi man had kept his bag, previously secreted among Davie's luggage. A train for the coast was due to leave in about an hour. He bought a ticket and set himself to wait.



Chapter Five

STEPHEN stood solitary in the bows of the Dover-Calais steamer, unmindful of the wind and rain, his thoughts balanced between bitterness and sadness. Presently, seating himself on an arm of a winch, unmindful of the sharp, cutting breeze, he took his sketch-book

from his pocket. The movement was an outcry from the heart. He drew, with great rapidity, waves strange and ominous, seeing in their fretted contours, in their lashing crests, wild human faces and writhing torsos.

It was, perhaps, a kind of madness. He was shivering as the steamer at last edged warily into the arms of the Calais breakwater. On the Paris train, huddled in the corner of a draughty compartment, he shivered repeatedly, knew that he had caught a chill.

Peyrat, Glyn, even the Lamberts would still be absent from Paris. In desperation, Stephen went to Harry Chester's lodging. Harry must owe him at least thirty pounds, a sum which now assumed significance since Stephen had only five pounds, nine shillings in his pocket. But Chester, too, was away. However, Stephen obtained from the concierge his forwarding address: the Hotel du Lion d'Or, Netiers, Normandy.

Encouraged, he sent off a telegram, explaining his situation and requesting Chester to wire at least part of the money in care of Alphonse Bisque, Peyrat's pastrycook friend.

He put up for the night at a cheap hotel, and the next morning, feeling better, although with an aggravating cough, he made his way towards the patisserie. Monsieur Bisque received him cordially, his moon face wreathed in smiles, and produced, with the air of a conjurer, Chester's answering telegram. It conveyed no actual cash.

DELIGHTED HAVE YOUR WIRE. JOIN ME HERE. WEATHER AND HOTEL.
EXCELLENT. FINE PAINTING COUNTRY. BEST REGARDS. HARRY.

This friendly invitation brightened Stephen's eyes. He reclaimed his easel and stored equipment from Napoleon Campo, and purchased new tubes of colour and fresh canvases. On these he made a down payment of fifty francs, promising Campo to remit the balance when he arrived at Netiers.

The express for Normandy, leaving from the Gare Montparnasse, was not crowded, and Stephen secured an empty compartment. His head was stuffy and he had a sharp stitch in his right side, but he lost his lassitude in watching the passing landscape: vast fields of yellow stubble flanked by long lines of poplars; teams of great horses dragging upon the plough; old farm buildings, ochre-tiled; a gaggle of geese herded in slow procession by a barelegged girl with a hazel switch.

Towards three o'clock the train ran into the little station of Netiers. Stephen collected his things and jumped off. Chester was not on hand to meet him and he began to walk in the direction of the town. He passed a moated wall, entered crooked cobbled streets so narrow the sharp-pitched grey-stone houses seemed to meet above his head. Finally, in the heart of the market place, he saw the gilded sign of the Lion d'Or. He made his way to the reception desk.

"My name is Desmonde. Will you be kind enough to let Mr. Chester know that I have arrived? He is expecting me."

The clerk studied Stephen for a moment, then said in chilly tones: "Monsieur Harry Chester *was* residing here, monsieur. Until this morning when we presented his bill. Since then we have not seen your famous Monsieur Chester."

Stephen gazed at the clerk, stupefied.

"Here is a letter your friend has left for you."

An envelope was tossed across the counter. It had been opened.

Dear Old Boy,

I thought we might make a go of it together but the book-keeping department here got one step ahead of me. I'll probably make my way South, stay in Nice for a while, try my luck at the tables. I shall certainly see you sooner or later. Frightfully sorry and all that—but needs must when the devil drives.

Yours,
Harry

The clerk was looking at him with unconcealed contempt. Stephen crushed the note between his fingers and swung round, out into the street.

Standing there, penniless, in this strange town, Stephen became disquietingly aware of how powerful was the weapon his father had used. Never before had he been without money. Nevertheless, with native obduracy, he set out to find temporary shelter.

Before the afternoon was far advanced he was installed in a little top room in a back courtyard at only twelve francs a week. As he had baggage, the landlady asked no advance but he resolved to raise the money to pay her before many hours had passed. His university training must surely fit him for some modest position. If only he felt less confoundedly

seedy! But a fierce desire to prove himself sent him out again to the centre of the town.

Most of the shops had that look of solid prosperity associated with a thriving agricultural district. Spades and hayforks, scythes, a red toothed harrow were ranged in the hardware store; there were *petit fours* and sugar almonds, contrived like bridal bouquets, in the window of a trim pastry shop; while in the corner creamery a great mound of Normandy butter stood yellow on its china slab.

On an impulse, he entered the town hall and, selecting a clerk with a sympathetic air, sounded him out on the possibilities of employment in the town. The youth shook his head. "It is difficult . . . in a small place like this. The people are not amiable to strangers."

For an hour Stephen combed the town without success. As night fell he returned, tired and discouraged, to his lodging. The sum of his resources was now one franc, fifteen sous.

Next day, he made a tour, on foot, of the neighbouring farms. Altogether he must have tramped a distance of twenty kilometres. And in vain. At one farm he was given a nourishing hunk of pastry and a brimming bowl of milk. But there was no work for him.

That night as he tossed sleeplessly a frightful despondency fell upon him and, turning his face to the whitewashed wall, he cried like a child. The bout was soon over; but unluckily it had started off his cough. Throughout the night it troubled him severely. At last, towards dawn, he fell asleep.

It was late when he awoke. He got up, dressed without shaving and went into the town. He was walking aimlessly when he heard someone running after him. A hand was laid on his own. He started, and swung round. It was the clerk from the town hall.

"Excuse me, monsieur." The young man paused for breath. "I have been watching for you. I have made some inquiries on your behalf. And Madame Cruchot who with her husband keeps the grocer's there," he pointed across the street, "has two little daughters whom she wishes to be taught English. It is possible you might suit her."

"Thank you," Stephen stammered, overcome. "Thank you very much."

The young clerk smiled. "Good luck." He shook hands, raised his hat, and stood watching as Stephen hurried across the street.

The Cruchot grocery, with double plate-glass windows and a glittering sign-board, gave every indication of a prosperous establishment. A stream of customers passed in and out of the doorway, narrowed by hanging hams, nets of lemons and baskets of choice vegetables. Inside, presiding at a small desk, controlling the commotion, Stephen saw a yellow haired woman in a mauve dress. She wore several rings and bangles, a large cameo brooch and heavy gold drop ear rings.

"I beg your pardon," Stephen said. "My name is Desmonde. I understand you might require an English tutor for your children."

Madame Cruchot's eyes narrowed with cold appraisal. The young man before her looked "refined," and diffident enough to give no trouble.

"M'sieur can offer me some account of himself?"

Quite frank, Stephen did so.

"So m'sieur has been a student of the college of Oxford." A gleam illuminated Madame's china blue eyes but in the interests of bargaining was quickly concealed. "What salary would you require, m'sieur?"

Hurriedly Stephen tried to calculate the barest stipend which would support him. "Should we say thirty francs a week?"

With a gesture of dismay, Madame Cruchot raised her plump, ringed hands. Then she smiled, flashing a gold tooth at him like a bullet. "M'sieur amuses himself. We are far from rich, Monsieur Cruchot and I. The utmost my husband empowers me to offer is twenty francs."

"But, Madame. I am obliged to live."

Madame Cruchot shook her yellow chignon sadly.

"We too, m'sieur."

Stephen bit his lip, rage and pride swelling in his heart. The weekly rent of his room was twelve francs. How on earth could he keep himself on the eight francs that would remain? He half turned to leave. But Madame Cruchot leaned forward with an air of solicitude. "Perhaps if luncheon were provided, it might somewhat aid the situation?"

Abased beyond endurance, Stephen could not lift his eyes. He muttered: "Very well. I accept."

"Good. You will start tomorrow at eleven o'clock. And doubtless in future m'sieur will not neglect to shave."

Stephen bent his head. He could not speak. Yet despite his humiliation,

he could not but experience a sensation of relief. With twenty francs and a daily lunch, he was saved.

EVERY MORNING Stephen was awakened by the great bell of the cathedral which swung thrice at the Elevation of the seven o'clock Mass, sending the pigeons flying over the empty cobbled square. In a nearby workmen's café he breakfasted for five sous on a cup of black coffee chased down by a tot of white wine, a combination amazing in its restorative power.

At eleven, Stephen presented himself at the Cruchot home, situated behind the shop. Here, in the trellised arbour or, on wet days, in the ornate salon, Stephen gave his attention to the little Cruchot girls. Victorine, aged eleven, and Marie-Louise, who was nine.

They were a trifle spoiled, but very sweet in their ways. Stephen did not find them difficult to manage and soon grew fond of them.

Monsieur Cruchot, a man of medium size, with darting coffee coloured eyes and a heavy, black, up-curved moustache, did not come often to the lessons. But Madame Cruchot came every day, upsetting the children and causing them to make mistakes.

In answer to her repeated demands Stephen taught the little girls the first stanza of *To a Skylark*. Then on a day appointed to demonstrate their progress, Madame appeared with three of her intimates, wives of prominent shopkeepers, who arranged themselves expectantly on the factory-gilt chairs of the salon.

Marie-Louise, chosen first for the test, got as far as "*Hail to thee, blithe spirit!*" then stopped, glanced round and suppressed a titter.

"Begin again, Marie-Louise," said Stephen kindly.

"*Hail to thee, blithe spirit. . .*" Again the child broke down, blinked, twisted her sash and glanced timidly at her mother.

"Go on," said Madame Cruchot in a strange voice.

Marie-Louise cast an imploring look at her teacher. A light sweat was breaking on Stephen's forehead.

Without warning, Madame Cruchot reached forward and slapped the child's cheek. Marie-Louise burst into tears.

In the moment of consternation which followed, a voice was heard calling loudly from the shop, "Come quickly, madame, the liver is here from the slaughter-house."

Stephen stood helplessly, foreseeing with sardonic fatalism the possibility of his dismissal. But when her mother reappeared, Marie-Louise ran across the room, took hold of his hand and instantly recited the poem, completely. Victorine, not to be outdone, followed with a perfect performance.

Immediately there were cries of acclamation, smiles and nods were bestowed on Stephen, Madame Cruchot glowed with triumph. And after she had shown the ladies out she gave Stephen for lunch a plate of hot ragout, garnished with carrots and Bordeaux onions, instead of the usual thin slice of ham. Then, seating herself opposite him at the table, she remarked:

"My friends were much pleased with you. Madame Oulard—she is the wife of our first *pharmacien*, a lady of some position in the town, though naturally she cannot afford a tutor for her children—considers you *très sympathique*."

"I'm very grateful for her good opinion."

"Did you think her a pretty woman?"

"Good gracious, no," said Stephen, absently.

Madame Cruchot patted her pads of yellow hair. "Let me get you more ragout," she said.

In the following days the quality and the quantity of the English tutor's midday meal improved. Stephen, upon whom inadequate nutrition and that persistent cough had wrought considerable physical damage, began to feel stronger, and he experienced one day, for the first time since coming to Netiers, a burning desire to paint. On leaving for the grocery, he took with him a block of India paper and a handful of coloured chalks. When the lesson was almost over he set the two children to reading in the arbour; then, with swift, sure, happy lines he made a pastel of them. The thing was done quickly, but never had he achieved anything so vivid, so fresh.

He heard a sound behind him: Madame Cruchot, over his shoulder, was gazing at the pastel. She saw her two children beautifully suggested in a few lines, a few shades of pure and brilliant colour. She knew nothing of art. Yet her astute commercial instinct made her instantly aware that here was something of the highest quality. Immediately she coveted it. But beyond that, she experienced a singular and further quickening of her feeling for this strange young Englishman.



"I did not understand," she said with stunned incredulity, "that m'sieur was truly an artist, highly gifted."

Perhaps you would care to have this—" Stephen said pleasantly.

The question, with its implication of purchase, made her withdraw slightly, but only for an instant. She answered "Yes, M'sieur Stephen, and I shall speak of it to my husband. Of course, it is possible he will argue that the work was done in the hour of teaching, for which you are already paid, in which case—"

"My dear Madame Cruchot," Stephen broke in, "you misunderstand me. I offer you the picture as a gift."

Her eyes glistened, not from cupidity, but with a softer emotion. "I accept, M'sieur Stephen. I assure you that you will not regret it." With a sidelong glance, fleeting but intense, she rose, and made her way back to the shop.

AFTER WEEKS of apathy, Stephen found that he could paint again. The little town with its drab inhabitants became suddenly a teeming source of inspiration. The canvases he had bought from Napoleon Campo were one by one transformed, stacked in the corner of his attic bedroom. There were letters, too, from Pevrat and Glyn to cheer him.

In this state of resurrection, his mind was not wholly upon his teaching of the Cruchot children. And because of this abstraction he remained oblivious to the changes in Madame Cruchot's attitude towards him. The vast improvement in the cuisine and other marks of attention he put down to his employer's gratitude for the picture.

As he entered one day, however, she intercepted him in the passage.

"My friend," she exclaimed, gaily, "I have good news for you—a commission! Monsieur Cruchot insists that you must paint me."

Taken aback, Stephen stared at her in silence.

"But, Madame," he said at last, seeking an excuse. "I . . . I do not undertake portraits. . . ."

She smiled at him reassuringly. "Do not worry, *mon petit*. I shall see that you are paid. On Thursday then, we shall begin." Before he could protest, she patted his arm and, with an arch backward glance, hurried away.

Thursday was the tradesmen's half-holiday. It was always quiet then since the shop closed down at noon. Yet, the moment Stephen arrived, he sensed in the shuttered establishment a preternatural stillness. Madame Cruchot received him at the door.

"No lesson today," she announced. "The little ones have gone to the country with the maid."

She added, in an off hand manner, "My husband is at Rennes, for the market. We shall not be disturbed."

Talking volubly, she produced from the pantry a bottle of champagne. 'Is this tête-à-tête not agreeable? Let me give you some champagne. It is the best we sell. Five francs the bottle.'

He felt confused, baffled and uneasy, becoming more and more conscious of her languishing glances. He felt obliged to get the sitting under way and to make it as brief as possible.

"And now, Madame, if you are agreeable, we may begin. Where will you sit for me? In the salon?"

"No," she replied in an indistinct voice, "it is a better light upstairs." She rose. "I shall get ready now. Finish your wine. Then come up."

After waiting for five minutes he went upstairs.

On the landing the door facing him was ajar. He imagined it gave access to a sitting-room, but before he could knock she called to him: 'Enter, *mon ami*.'

He went in. Madame Cruchot was standing by a double bed. She wore a peignoir and stood in a raffish pose, one hand on her hip. Then, with terrible coquetry, she came towards him.

A cold sweat broke over Stephen. He backed away, infuriated at himself for having fallen into such a situation. Without a word, he swung round and rushed from the house.

 *Chapter Six*

NEXT MORNING Stephen packed his rucksack, roped his canvases together and departed from Netiers on foot. Towards five o'clock in the afternoon, a lorry stopped beside him and the driver, proud of this new means of transportation and his mastery of it, offered to take him to Paris. They drove all night and, as dawn broke, they crossed the Seine and entered the city.

Paris had a haggard air, yet as Stephen strode across the Pont Neuf he breathed the dank air deeply. He felt suffused by a hard determination to demonstrate his talent to the world.

He pawned his watch, a present from the Rector on his twenty-first birthday, for one hundred and eighty francs. Next, after a considerable search, he found a lodging near the Place St. Séverin. It was a poor quarter, frequented by artists, and a poorer room, but it had a good light and was cheap.

It was now past two, but without thought of food, he selected four of his paintings and hurried to Napoleon Campo's shop. The colourman was seated on a box behind the counter, wearing a blue pilot coat and yellow knitted cap, his chapped ears protruding, purple cheeks unshaven.

"Well, Monsieur l'Abbé, what can I do for you?"

"First of all, let me give you the fifty francs I owe you."

"Good. You are an honest man."

"And now, Monsieur Campo, I want a large canvas, two hundred centimetres by eighty."

"So a great work is in prospect! Of course, you can pay?"

"Not money, Monsieur Campo. These paintings."

"Are you crazy, Abbé? My cellar is stuffed with paintings, rubbish that I took through the softness of my heart."

"Not all rubbish, Campo. You took paintings from Pissarro, and Degas."

"Are you a Degas, my little Abbé?"

"One day, perhaps."

"It is always the same fairy tale. You are to have fame and fortune overnight. Bah!"

"Then take twenty francs down and the paintings as a pledge against the balance."

Napoleon's pin point blue eyes searched the pale, serious face before him. He was not easily moved, but occasionally there had been in the manner of some needy aspirant, as there was in this Englishman, a quality of intensity which impressed him. Grumbling, he began to rummage in his shelves. When the canvas lay upon the counter, Stephen counted out the coins.

Napoleon Campo took snuff meditatively. "And now, naturally, you will starve."

Suddenly Campo pushed the coins back across the counter. "Return these to your offertory box, Abbé. And give me your wretched daubs."

Surprised, Stephen handed over his paintings. Without even a glance Napoleon thrust them under the counter.

"Don't you want to look at them? They are the best I've done."

"I am not a judge of paintings but of people," Campo retorted gruffly. "Good day, monsieur. And good fortune."

LATER Stephen set off for the bicycle shop in the Rue de Bièvre. He felt nervous, yet filled with an anticipation that made his heart beat fast. Often during the past months the recollection of those moments with Emmy Berthelot in the dark, narrow passage had come to him with a queer insistence.

He found her in the yard behind the workshop, oiling a red and gold bicycle. She accepted his greeting without surprise, then went on with her work. His pulse was absurdly uneven.

"That's a nice looking machine," he said.

"I shall be using it soon." She straightened, thrust back a lock of hair. "Want to hire a wheel?"

He shook his head and took a quick breath. "Have you heard of the Prix de Luxembourg, Emmy? It's a competition open to all artists who've never been in the Salon. I mean to have a shot at it." As she turned away indifferently, he added, "I want you to sit for me."

Arrested, she stared at him. "Do my picture?"

"That's it."

He could see that her vanity was flattered. Then a thought struck her. "But I'm going on tour next month."

"That's time enough, if you come every day for three weeks."

"Well," she said, ungraciously, "I can't lose."

He suppressed an exclamation of satisfaction. She would be perfect for the subject which in these last few hours had taken command of him. He gave her his new address, asked her to be there at ten tomorrow, wearing her black sweater and pleated skirt.

Tramping back along the boulevard, Stephen realized suddenly that he had not eaten since he shared a sandwich with the driver of the *camion* on the previous evening. Hunger struck him like a blow. He bought a long loaf and a *tranche* of sausage. Strolling through the darkening street past the Jardin des Plantes, he bit alternately the crisp bread and the succulent *pâté*. How good it tasted. He felt happy, free, and strangely exalted.

On the next day, Emmy arrived some twenty minutes late.

"I thought you were never coming," he exclaimed.

She gazed round the wretched little room with its broken cane chair and sagging bed. Finally she looked at him, cruelly. "You're broke, aren't you?"

"Practically."

"You have a nerve. Getting me up to a hole like this."

He reddened. "It's not a bad place to paint in. Just give me a chance and I promise you won't regret it."

With a shrug she permitted him to pose her by the window. Filled with a surge of power, he began to outline his conception. As the rules of the competition demanded a classical painting, his theme, though modern in composition, was to be allegorical: *Circe and Her Lovers*. In his imagination pleasure fought with virtue, and lust took the shape of prowling beasts. He felt the power to make his dream exist.

Although he could have gone on all day, he did not dare to keep her long, and towards noon suggested stopping. Immediately, she came to examine the preliminary sketch he had made. The sulky look left her face as she saw herself occupying the centre of the canvas, legs apart, hands planted on her hips, an attitude which was all her own. She said nothing as he helped her on with her coat but at the door she turned and nodded. "Same time tomorrow."

As the sittings progressed, he could no longer blind himself to the deepening of his feeling for Emmy. He reminded himself that it was

not regard for him but vanity that brought her regularly to his room. When she was in an ill humour her responses came in monosyllables, and when he told her she might rest she would sprawl on her stomach on the bed, light a cigarette and immerse herself in a crumpled sports magazine.

But the legend from the *Odyssey*, the idea that Circe possessed the power to change men into the forms of animals, tickled her fancy

"That'll teach them, for trying it on," she said

The vulgarity made him wince. She was common, cheap and tough—unintelligent, unimaginative, callous. She knew nothing of art, and when he spoke of it was bored. Her small figure was exquisite and she had a gamin prettiness, but her expression was sullen. All her imperfections were apparent to him. Yet they made not the slightest difference to this strange emotion that grew within him. On the rare occasions when she was agreeable his heart lifted. It only he could take her out in the evening he felt that he might win her favour. But he was living on little more than half a franc a day, subsisting on a roll or an apple until six o'clock, then taking his solitary meal at the cheapest cafe in the district.

One afternoon she arrived later than usual, in excellent spirits. She was wearing a yellow fichu with a short red Zouave jacket, and her hair had been freshly washed.

"You're looking extremely nice," he said. "And I'd almost given you up."

"I had an appointment with Peroz. I got the contract I wanted. We leave the fourteenth of October."

"I shall miss you, Emmy." A sudden surge of longing overcame him. "Don't you realize that I've grown terribly fond of you?"

She laughed shortly and raised a warning finger.

"None of that, Abbe. It's not in our arrangement."

She laughed again and he noticed that her teeth were sharp and regular, with spaces in between. Vivaciously, as he began to paint, she described how she had got the better of Peroz in arranging the agreement.

"They say he's good-hearted," she concluded. "I think he's just a soft touch."

He encouraged her to go on talking about herself. Then, as the light failed, Stephen put down his brushes.

"Let me walk back with you," he said. "It's a lovely evening."

"Well," she shrugged. "If you like."

They went downstairs and presently came out to the Boulevard Gav ranche. Couples were moving slowly, arm in arm, along the quiet pavements—the night seemed made for lovers. In a side street near the river they passed a café where, to the music of an accordion, people were dancing gaily in a little arbour, under Chinese lanterns hung from the branches of plane trees. He could feel her glancing towards him inquiringly.

"Don't you like to dance?"

With a slow flush of embarrassment, he shook his head "I shouldn't be much good in there."

She gave her familiar shrug "You're not good at much, are you?" she said.

They reached the cobbled shadows of the quays. As though bored by his silence, walking a little in advance, she had begun to hum the tune of the accordion.

"Wait, Emmy." He drew her into the shelter of an archway.

"What's on your mind, Abbé?"

"Can't you see how much you mean to me?"

He put his arms round her and held her close. For a few moments she permitted him to embrace her, then, with an abrupt movement of impatience, she pushed him away.

"You don't know the first thing about it." There was contempt in her voice.

Hurt and humiliated, he followed her down the street. Outside the bicycle shop she glanced at him as though nothing had happened. "Shall I come once more tomorrow?"

"No," he said bitterly. "It won't be necessary."

He turned away, hating her for her hardness, telling himself he would never see her again.

"Don't forget," she called after him, "I want to see it when it's done."

Next morning he threw himself passionately into the completion of the picture. So far, only the central figure had taken form. He went every forenoon to make studies at the Zoological Gardens; then, returning to his room, he transposed to the abject creatures he put upon the canvas something of his own sadness and subjection. At the end of that

week his money ran out—searching for a coin to buy a roll, he could not find a single sou. He continued to paint with a kind of fury.

On the following day he felt weak and faint and realized that he would never finish the *Circe* unless he could find some means of sustenance. He selected three of his *Netiers* pictures that were especially bright and colourful, wrapped them in brown paper and, with the package under his arm, set out through the rain. It was an act of courage. He was resolved to offer his work to the best art dealer in France.

IN THE rosewood panelled entrance hall of an imposing building on the Faubourg St. Honoré, Stephen found a young man in a cutaway coat, seated at a Louis XVI lacquer and ormolu desk. Through the portières behind, a large salon was visible, hung with paintings, before which a number of fashionable people moved.

The sleek young man viewed Stephen with extreme wariness.

"Your business, monsieur?"

"A personal matter with Monsieur Tessier."

"I am afraid that Monsieur Tessier is not in the house. However, if you will take a chair I shall inquire."

As Stephen seated himself a side door opened, and three persons came out—a woman, very chic, carrying a miniature poodle, fantastically clipped; her escort, an elderly man, bored and distinguished; and Tessier, whom Stephen recognized at once, a suave figure, with a protruding lower lip and dark, hooded eyes. The dealer was talking.

"I assure you, it is a perfect gem of the Barbizon school. The finest Millet which has come my way for several years."

"It is lovely," said the lady.

"But one hundred thousand francs!" her companion interpolated.

"If you do not wish me to reserve it for you, you have only to let me know. Virtually, I am committed to another client."

There was a touch on the escort's sleeve, a murmur of intimate conversation, then: "You may consider the picture sold."

Gravely approving such good taste, Tessier conducted them to the door, and when he turned Stephen stood up. "Monsieur Tessier, will you give me five minutes of your time?"

The dealer looked up sharply, taking in the shabby figure, from the mud-splashed shoes to the bundle beneath the arm

"No," he murmured. "Not now."

"But, monsieur," Stephen persisted, "I ask you only to view my work. It is as fine as anything from Barbizon."

Tessier's lip drew back. "Every week I am besieged by self-styled geniuses who imagine I will swoon with ecstasy when I behold their execrable efforts. But never has one had the effrontery to approach me here, at the opening of my autumn exhibition."

"I am sorry, but the matter is urgent."

"Another time, I beg of you," Tessier said in a fatigued manner. He entered the salon and was lost to view.

Stephen, who had begun to undo the package, moved towards the door. As he came into the wet street, the string slipped from his grasp, and the three canvases slid into the gutter. He picked them up, carefully. The mere act of stooping made his head swim. He told himself that there were other dealers in Paris, less arrogant than Tessier. Slowly he started across the street.

TWO HOURS later, wet through and still encumbered with the paintings, he was back at the Place St. Séverin, so exhausted he could barely climb to his room. As he did so, the door on the half landing swung open and there appeared, dressed in sabots and a threadbare black overcoat, a thin, sallow man of about thirty, with sunken eyes. He studied Stephen with a peculiar, bitter smile.

"No luck?" he exclaimed.

"No."

"Whom did you try?"

"Most of them . . . from Tessier down. I had one offer. Two hundred francs to fake a Breughel."

"Ah! Life has its little vexations. What's your name?"

"Desmonde."

"I am Amédée Modigliani. Come in and have a drink."

He threw open the door of his room, identical almost with Stephen's, but perhaps more squalid. Beside the unmade bed stood a stack of empty bottles and in the centre an easel bearing a large painting of a reclining nude.

"You like it?" Pouring two Pernods from a bottle, Modigliani inclined his head towards the canvas.

"Yes," Stephen said, after a moment.

"Good. But the police commissioner has proclaimed that my nudes are scandalous, and no one is buying. Were it not for my talent as a dishwasher at the Hotel Monarque, I should have obliged my critics and ceased to exist. Would you care to try the job? I am going there now."

"I'll try anything," Stephen said.

They went out together. The Grand Monarque, one of the most famous Parisian hotels, was a palatial building occupying an entire square. A bevy of liveried attendants hovered behind the polished brass doors, alert to receive its distinguished visitors. Modigliani, however, led the way round the corner and through a dark alley to a steep flight of steps which admitted them to a huge, feebly illuminated cellar. Its ceiling was crossed by a maze of dripping iron pipes, the walls were scaling, the level stone floor was covered with slops. At a long stand of steaming wooden tubs, a row of men, assembled, it seemed, from the slums of Paris, were feverishly washing dishes, which a relay of scullions kept rushing in from the adjoining kitchens.

Amedee approached the foreman, who handed Stephen a metal disk stamped with a number, and chalked a time opposite that number on the slate that hung above his cubicle. Imitating his companion, Stephen stripped off his jacket and, taking his place in the line, began to wash the dinner plates piled above the sink. The smell of the scummy water, foul with grease and remnants of food, was nauseating. It was strange to hear faint wafts of polite music coming from the orchestra in the palm court overhead.

Shortly before midnight there was a lull. Amedee put on his coat, and with a motion of his head drew Stephen towards the door, where the foreman paid each of them two francs fifty.

Outside, Amedee slouched off through the darkened streets and led the way into an all night bistro. Here, he drank several Pernods while Stephen consumed a large bowl of *pot au feu*, thick with good vegetables and shredded pieces of mutton. It was his first satisfying meal for several days.

"Don't you want anything?" he asked.

Amedee gazed at the opalescent fluid in the glass which he held in his nicotine-stained fingers. "This is meat and drink to me."

Seated there in the deserted café, the billiard table in the rear shrouded

for the night, the solitary waiter half asleep with his serviette over his head, Amédée revealed something of himself.

Born in Italy, of a family of Jewish bankers, he had studied, despite illness, in Florence and in Venice. For the past seven years, inspired by the primitives and Negro art, he had worked in Paris, sometimes with his friend Picasso, and occasionally with Gris. He had sold practically nothing. "So now," he concluded, "you see me, enfeebled by poverty, alcohol and pernicious drugs. Alone, except for a young girl who has the misfortune to be devoted to me. Devoid of all reputation. But rejoicing in the fact that I have never debased my art."

THIS strange encounter was a providential one for Stephen. Now, by enduring five hours of labour every night at the Grand Monarque he was able to continue to work upon the *Circe*.

At last, some three weeks later, it was finished. There she stood, in careless insolence, this modern temptress, her background not a classic isle but a Paris slum street. And grouped about her were the broken, servile, longing beasts.

In nervous haste, Stephen wrapped the painting and carried it all the way to the Institut des Arts Graphiques. Here an aged official took his name, then, discovering that the canvas was unframed, became reluctant to accept it. Stephen, glimpsing a long gallery stacked with scores of submitted paintings, experienced a sudden apathy.

"I cannot afford a frame. Take it as it is, or not at all."

The official threw up his hands.

"It is most irregular, monsieur. But leave it if you wish."

Back in his attic Stephen sat down, supporting his head with his hands. What was he to do? Impossible to continue washing dishes, his soul revolted at the thought; yet, except for his clothes, his painting equipment and fifteen sous, he was destitute.

But this was nothing compared to the insupportable sense of loneliness and deprivation that racked him. No longer dulled by the anodyne of work, his longing for Emmy returned, stronger than ever. He blamed himself for not having asked her to view the painting. And in a few days she would be gone, moving south to the sunny Côte d'Azur with the Peroz troupe.

Suddenly, out of the blue, an idea came to him. Snatching his hat, he

hurried from the room and set off shakily in the direction of the Boulevard Jules Ferry.

Chapter Seven

OUTSIDE the city of Angers, on the River Loire, under a brilliant October sky the Cirque Peroz, ringed by bright red caravans, had raised its canvas city. Already the side shows were in action, the barkers had begun their exhortations.

At his stand in the line of booths, dressed in a blue blouse, beret and loose black tie, Stephen took a long breath of the country air, aromatic with wood smoke, tan-bark and the scent of horses. He did not regret the impulse that had taken him to Peroz six weeks ago. He was almost happy. Beside him stood an ornate easel bearing a sign that extolled him as the Great Artist of London and Paris and promised an exact likeness, in high-grade charcoal for five francs; in rich and permanent colours, seven francs fifty, courtesy and service as afforded to the crowned heads of Europe, satisfaction guaranteed.

"Walk up, walk up. Come, sir, won't you persuade mademoiselle to have her pretty face drawn? Make a record for your grandchildren."

A country couple, arm in arm, wearing their Sunday clothes lingered before him. Blushing, the young woman came forward. With a few swift strokes he drew a pleasant likeness, brought out the fine lacework on her coif, and, taught by experience, did not forget her cameo brooch, a family treasure.

Meanwhile a small crowd had collected, there were murmurs of approval for the finished portrait and soon he was hard at work. At six o'clock the crowd thinned, as it always did before the main performance of the circus. Taking down his sign, Stephen went through ropes and canvas to a small enclosure behind the adjoining booth. Here, crouched at a glowing brazier, a shrivelled little man in cracked leggings and soiled corduroy breeches was cooking supper.

"What have we tonight, Jo-jo?"

"The usual. Also some fresh Angers pork sausage which I picked up." Jo-jo, who in his youth had been a jockey, then stableman, then bookies' tout, was an expert forager.

"I like these two night stands." Stephen made room on the brazier for a tin coffee percolator. "We're free tomorrow until three. Emmy and I mean to have a look at the river."

As he spoke the flap of the booth opened and a strange looking man in check trousers and a khaki turtle neck sweater came out. His face and hands were covered with a thick crust of coppery scales. This was Jean Baptiste, who shared a car in with Stephen and Jojo. Mild and well educated, he was an extreme case of chronic psoriasis, a painless yet incurable and gruesome condition of the skin which had broken up his marriage and lost him his position. Now, by exposing himself to the curious as the Human Alligator, he made a modest livelihood.

When the meal was ready they shared it sitting round the glowing charcoal—a big pot of steaming soup followed by the sausages, spiced with country herbs, the gravy sopped up with hunks of fresh bread then coffee, hot and strong, a bottle of the local liqueur.

It was Stephen's turn to wash up. When he had finished lights were glowing like fire flies over the fairground. He had not seen Emmy all day, but she did not like to be disturbed just before the show and people were already converging towards the big tent. He crossed to the back entrance of the arena where it was his duty to join the staff that showed patrons to their seats, dispensed programmes, ices, lemonade and nougat.

Tier upon tier of expectant faces rose up from the sawdust ring. On its raised platform draped with red and gold, the brass band struck into the Grand March, the ringmaster, Peroz himself, appeared in top hat, white cords and scarlet coat, a procession of cream ponies entered with tossing manes into the arena and the performance began.

It was fascinating, this new world Stephen had discovered, with its superb, high stepping horses, ponderous elephants and yellow eyed lions, its acrobats, jugglers and swaying tight rope walkers. Crouched in a corner with a sketch book on his knee he drew and drew. This was his real work, and already in the portfolio in his locker he had scores of studies which he would use in one tremendous composition.

After the interval, when the more important performers made their appearance, a wooden floor was swiftly assembled in the ring and there came that fanfare which always caused his heart to beat fast. Then Emmy cycled in, wearing a white satin blouse, white shorts and long white boots. She began to execute upon the light nickel plated machine

a series of evolutions that left the spectator dizzy, circling and turning within the confined space of the flooring, altering her position until she rode upside down beneath the handle bars, finally dismembering the machine while in motion and completing the complex pattern upon a single wheel. A burst of applause was followed by a silence as Emmy walked towards the far end of the arena where a high metal chute, painted red, white and blue, descended almost vertically from the roof of the tent and ended in an abrupt up curve some feet short of the wooden floor.

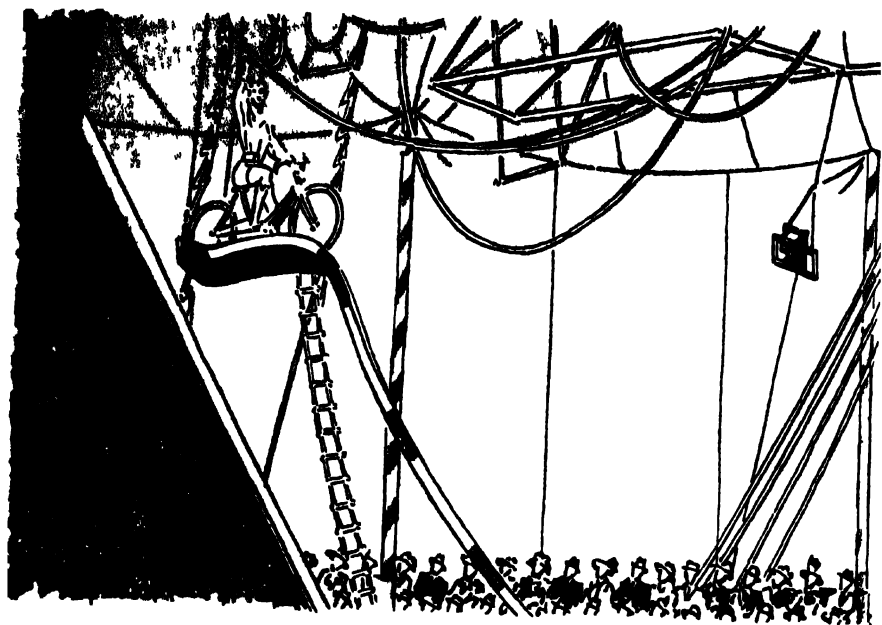
By altering its tempo the band exaggerated the suspense as Emmy, slowly climbing the rope ladder, reached the minute platform at the top of the chute. There, she unhooked a heavier cycle from its cleats, tested the frames, stretched her limbs, dusted her hands with chalk. Finally, mounting the machine on the platform, she seemed for a long moment to be suspended. The brass, which had gradually muted to a prophetic murmur, now came to life, supported by the drums, which rolled and reverberated, louder, louder. It was the instant which made Stephen wish to close his eyes. Jo Jo had told him that the danger was limited, yet the white central strip down which the wheels must travel had less than a six inch span and when the humidity was high the slippery surface was treacherous. However, there was no time to think—in a final thunder of sound Emmy let herself go, dropped like a plummet, shot up the curve, flew through the air for thirty feet and landed on the wooden flooring with a velocity that carried her out of the tent like a flash.

Under cover of the applause, Stephen went round to the dressing tent. He had to wait fifteen minutes before she came out. She was not in the most amiable temper. "The chute was damp, and these lazy rascals hadn't wiped it. I almost didn't go down." On several such occasions, she had called the act off. Now, however, the complaint left her voice. "I wanted to tonight though, because of these military fellows. Did you see that group of officers in the front box?"

"I'm afraid not."

"A smart lot. I like a uniform. And were they trying to get off with me! Not that I took notice. Still, I did put in a little extra for their benefit."

He bit his lip, trying to stifle his jealousy.



"Let's walk by the town walls," he said "It's such a lovely night Look, the moon's just coming out "

"And I am just going in "

"I haven't seen you all day Do come "

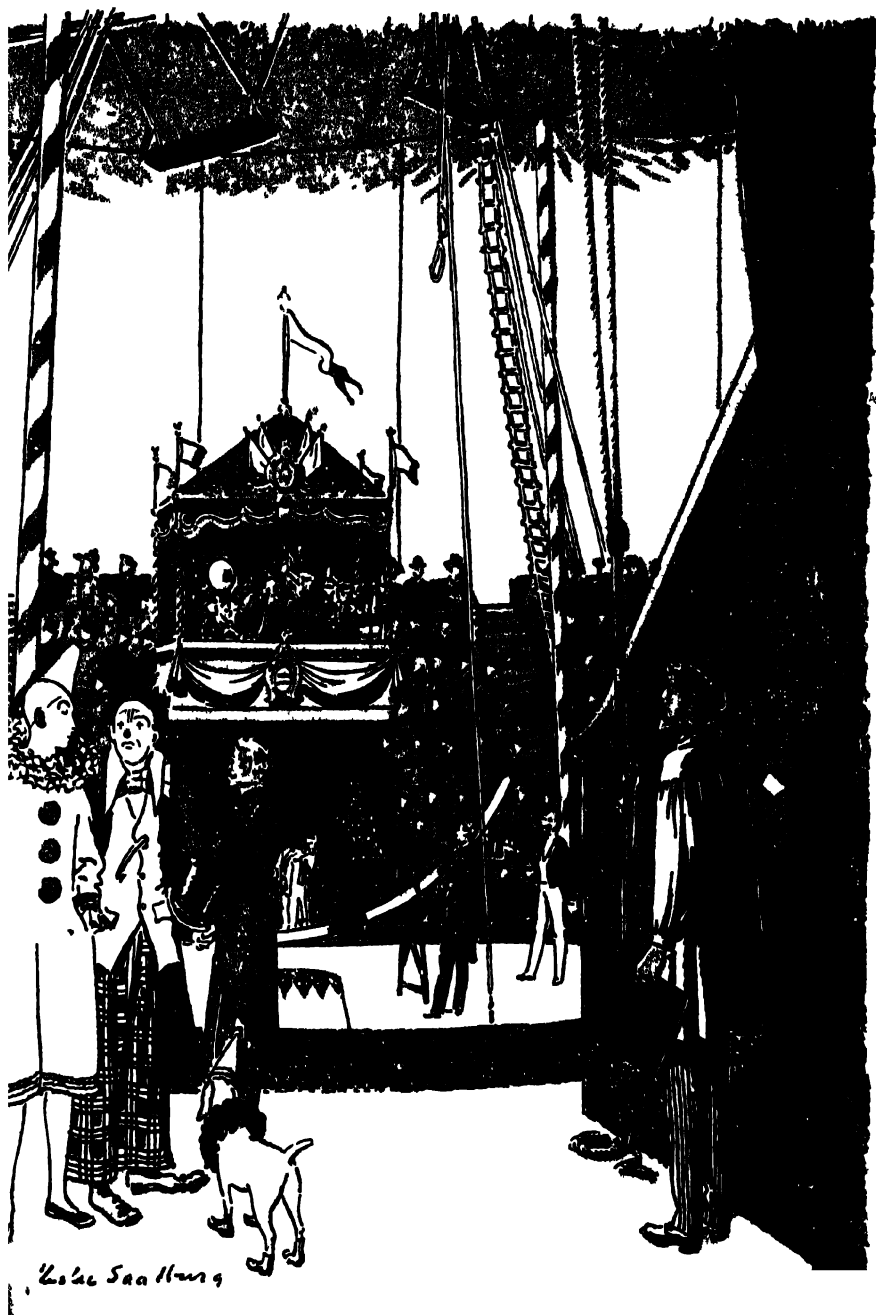
"Haven't I told you I am always fatigued after my act All very well for you, selling programmes and nougat "

He concealed his disappointment stoically, and walked with her to the caravan which she shared with Madame Armande, the costume woman. He had been hungry for Emmy's company all day As she stood there, seductive in the moonlight, he wanted to seize her roughly and force his kisses on her Instead he said

"Don't forget about the river tomorrow I'll be here at ten "

He watched her run up the steps and disappear into the caravan Then, restless and unsettled, he set out for the ramparts alone

ON THE following morning Emmy surprised and cheered him by being ready when he called, and shortly after they were on their bicycles, bound for the Loire. As usual, she set a very fast pace, with the fixed purpose of outdistancing him. His machine, bought cheap with



Lois San Hing

his first week's pay, was an old model; however, he maintained his place just behind her shoulder.

They swung through a wood and all at once the splendour of the valley was revealed—the broad, glinting river, moving lazily over shallows of golden sand, past little green islands and moored flat-bottomed boats. Behind a screen of beeches, Stephen glimpsed the lichened, grey façade and pointed turrets of an old château. The beauty of the countryside intoxicated him. Uplifted, he made as though to speak to Emmy, then, wisely, refrained.

Towards noon they drew up at a riverside inn, where above the doorway, a monstrous fish, swathed in weeds, swam in a glass case. The inn was empty of customers, which did not displease Stephen, who suffered from the too open admiration which his companion provoked at the more sporting cafés which she preferred. They sat down at a scrubbed table by a window hung with ivy and ordered a dish of tiny crisp Loire sprats which the landlady strongly recommended to them. With this came fried potatoes and the beer that Emmy favoured.

For once she was in an excellent humour.

"You'll never guess what I got this morning. Roses. And in them a *billet-doux* from one of the officers."

"Indeed." His expression had turned slightly rigid.

"Here it is. Monogram and all." She felt in her pocket and brought out a crumpled sheet. "Take a look."

He glanced at it, noting the double meaning in the polite phrases in viting her to supper. He handed it back without comment.

"He's a captain. Tall and good-looking, with a moustache."

"Will you go?" he asked in an expressionless tone.

"How can I, with the move to Tours tonight?"

"But the captain?" he persisted. "And with a moustache."

The irony of his manner pierced her self-esteem and a faint flush showed under her bluish-white skin. "What do you think I am? I know these army types. Not for me, thanks."

He paid the bill and they went down to the water's edge. The sun, reflecting upward from the stream in glittering shafts, enveloped them in light. And while she lit a cigarette and relaxed beneath a shady willow, he began to sketch her. Already he had made scores of drawings reflecting his feeling for her, that complex interplay of anguish, desire,

and at times near hatred. He was not blind to her selfishness, cruelty and vanity. He knew that she merely tolerated him because his unconcealed desire gave her a sense of power. Yet he longed for her with a physical need which increased from day to day.

Presently, glancing up from his sketch-book, he saw that she was asleep. He sighed irritably; then, on an impulse, went farther down the bank, threw off his clothes and plunged into the river. The shock of the spring-fed stream was an invigorating delight. When he had dressed, he returned. She was standing up, shaking the dried grass from her short bushy hair.

"What time is it?"

"Still early." He came close and put his arm round her waist. "We have another hour."

"Oh, leave me!" She pushed her hands against his chest.

"But, Emmy . . ."

"No, no. We mustn't be late. You don't want to lose your job."

Her unusual concern for his welfare puzzled him. Nor was this dispelled by her sprightly manner as they rode back to Angers. In a high voice she sang snatches of the latest music-hall air. And, following her habit when she was gay, she left the inhabitants of the riverside villages gaping by a display of trick riding.

When they reached the circus it was not yet three, but Stephen put up his easel. All the afternoon he worked moodily, struggling against the thought that she had cut short their expedition in order to keep an assignation with the officer. During supper he spoke scarcely a word to Jo-jo and the Croc. At last, he got up abruptly and made his way to Emmy's caravan.

Madame Armande was seated on the steps with a bucket between her fat knees, washing stockings. At one time she had been in a trapeze act but a bad fall had broken her hip. Now, at fifty, heavy and shapeless, she was the company gossip.

"Good evening," Stephen said. "Is Emmy in?"

"Abbé, you understand very well that she sees no one before the show. I would not dare disturb her."

He hesitated, anxious to believe her. "She's resting?"

"What else! *Nom de Dieu*, do you make me a liar?"

Was her indignation real? He forced himself to turn away.

The crowds flocked in, the show began, roars of laughter and applause filled the big tent. Emmy was late in coming on. When she finally appeared it seemed to his overstrung fancy that her performance was more dashing than usual. Prolonged shouts of "Bravo" followed her as she made her exit.

Afterwards, in the bustle and confusion of lifting stakes with the others, he could not see her. A cold wind whipped across the ground. All round, by the red light of flares, men toiled like demons, hauling on ropes, struggling with the great bights of flapping canvas. The animals gave out weird howls of protest. The traction engines, pounding and snorting, added to the tumult. To Stephen it seemed that the scene came straight from the *Inferno* and that he, too, was suffering the tortures of the damned.

THE CIRQUE PEROZ swung south east into the Côte d'Or, making one night stands in the old, stone-walled towns, strung out between sloping vineyards, along the valley of the Ouche.

Stephen had at first been viewed by the company with reserve. But the weekly "take" from his portraiture was satisfactory and since a percentage of this sum went into the *troupe*, in which all the troupe would share eventually, he was considered to be pulling his weight.

The troupe were a human lot. Fernand, the lion tamer, who strode fearlessly into the circular iron cage in his blue and silver uniform, with a sleeve dramatically slashed to ribbons, was the most timorous of men, who suffered from nervous dyspepsia and was coddled on a milk diet by his devoted wife. The aged lions were harmless as cows, and roared only because they wanted their supper. "We have not had an accident for twenty years," Peroz would remark complacently, as he sent out advance notices to the local paper of the next town on the circuit:

NARROW ESCAPE AT THE CIRQUE PEROZ

LIONESS RUNS AMUCK

Fernand severely mauled

Max and Montz, both dwarfs, were the two principal clowns. Their feature act was "The Elopement," a sketch carried out with an antique Panhard motor-car that finally fell apart. Max, who played the part of

an elderly bride, left the audience helpless from laughter. Yet out of the arena he manifested a profound melancholy and confided to Stephen a frustrated passion for the violin.

The Japanese juggler was a devout Christian Scientist; Nina d'Amora, who rode bareback, was allergic to horses; while Philippe, who every night took spectacular risks on the high trapeze, spent most of his spare time knitting socks.

Stephen saw more of Jo-jo and the Croc than any of the others, but it was for Jo-jo that he entertained a particular regard. The ex-jockey was a rogue, yet never in his life had he let down a friend. Often in the evening, when Stephen came into the caravan after seeing Emmy, he caught Jo-jo's gaze, fixed upon him with a sort of cynical understanding. Upon such occasions the ex-jockey turned to Jean Baptiste and started a deliberately general discussion about women.

Stephen knew that the dialogue was directed at him, intended as a remedy. Yet his malady had progressed so far it seemed incurable, intensified by Emmy's inconsistencies. Sometimes she treated him well and when they strolled together in the darkness permitted him to kiss her before quickly drawing away. He hung about her like a wasp round a nectarine.

ONE WET afternoon the circus pulled into the small community of Moulin-les-Drages. No advance bills had been posted. The town proved to be mean and poverty-stricken, and the rain steadily increased. When late afternoon came not more than a hundred people were assembled in the dripping tent.

Twice during Emmy's preliminary routine her wheel skidded, spilling her on to the damp flooring. The mishaps evoked catcalls from the boorish audience. As a result, Emmy cut the main part of her act and rode from the ring with her head in the air.

When Stephen saw her afterwards outside the tent she was pale with mortification. Silently, he moved off with her along the road towards the common, where the caravans were parked. They had not proceeded far when a heavy shower broke, forcing them to run for shelter to a barn that stood in an open field. "At least it's dry here," Stephen said. Then he added: "I'm glad you didn't go down the chute tonight. That crowd didn't deserve it. They seemed an unsympathetic lot."

"I didn't notice it. I always hold my audience."

"Then why didn't you go down?"

"Because the chute was sopping wet." In a spasm of temper, her eyes sparked at him in the semi-darkness. "Don't you know the risks I take every night, while you sit safe on your backside, scratching on a sheet of paper, with no more guts than a louse?"

Infuriated, he caught her round the waist. "Don't speak to me like that."

"Let me go."

"Not till you apologize."

The next instant they were struggling together. Stephen was blind with anger, but she fought like a wild cat, twisting and turning with feline suppleness. They swayed to and fro until, crooking her leg behind his, she threw him heavily.

"There," she gasped. "Let that be a lesson to you."

He got up slowly and saw, with confused surprise, that she was leaning back in the hay, watching him through narrowed eyes with an odd, speculative expression. On her face, usually of a cold pallor, there was a tinge of colour, on her pale lips a curious smile. She said suddenly: "Well, stupid . . . what are you waiting for?"

It was so blatant, so devoid of affection, that he did not stir. Frozen and repelled, he stared at her, then spun round and walked away. She could not believe it. Affronted and enraged, she jumped to her feet.

"Softy!" she called after him. "*Espèce de cretin!*"

Desire surged in him again. He turned back. "Emmy. . . ."

But now she was hard as stone.

"Go to the devil," she spat at him.

He felt he had reached the lowest level of abasement. He turned away again, going straight ahead, heedlessly. At last he found himself back on the circus ground. They were not leaving till the next day and the great tent still stood, empty and deserted. Something drove him inside. The moon had come out after the rain and was shining through the top aperture in the canopy, revealing the chute, which glistened with moisture. A strange impulse took shape in his tormented mind. He walked towards the rope ladder, took hold of it, began slowly to climb.

Now he was at the top, edging on to the platform. The height of the tiny perch made him so dizzy he closed his eyes and clung to the metal

support. But he compelled his rigid muscles into action. Shakily, he unhooked the bicycle from its cleats, aligned the wheels and mounted. Then, his arm hooked firmly to the pole, he forced himself to look down.

The ring beneath him was a distant yellow disk. The chute, over which he was poised, seemed no wider than a ribbon. He was still holding on; he could go back. Fear petrified him. He fought it.

He took a deep breath, crouched forward, vaguely conscious of a shout, of a dark foreshortened figure waving from below. Focusing his gaze on the central white strip, he let go. There came a split second of flying descent, an upward surge through the air, then with a resounding bounce he was down, spilling out into the field outside. He lay there, surprised to be alive. Then he heard someone running towards him.

"*Nom de Dieu* . . . do you try to kill yourself?" It was Jo-jo.

"No," said Stephen, getting up giddily. "But what difference would it have made

Jo-jo stared at him. "Come and have a drink."

They went across to the village café. After a glass of Calvados, Stephen's hand stopped shaking. But he realized he had accomplished nothing. He could not break with her. The pain in his heart was still there.



Chapter Fight

TWO WEEKS later the circus reached Nice. The glittering sea front with its ostentatious hotels seemed disagreeably pretentious. But the circus ground was inland, surrounded by narrow streets filled with little flower and fruit stalls which had the intimate charm of Paris and the added warmth of the south.

One afternoon, standing at his easel in the fairground completing a final portrait, Stephen became conscious of a spectator at his elbow. He glanced round.

"Chester!"

"How are you, old boy?" Harry broke into his infectious laugh and held out his hand. "And where on earth did you get that frightful rig-out?"

"It goes with the job."

"That's one way to attract the natives. But it must make you feel a bit of an ass."

Chester was fashionably dressed. His face was deeply tanned

"You look well," Stephen said, delivering the portrait "I gather you've had some luck at the tables"

"To put it mildly, yes." Chester grinned "I was down to my uppers and bet my last fifty francs on double zero When it came up I kept betting on it with everything left on Double zero came up three times You never saw such a pile of lovely big red counters The third time I picked everything up quick and scooted to the cashier's desk I've been living like a lord ever since" He took Stephen's arm "Now tell me about yourself. How's the work going?"

"Only so-so"

"Let's have a look."

Stephen led the way to his caravan, brought out a few of his canvases and stood them one by one against the hub cap

"Well, old boy," Harry declared at last, "you may have something, but I can't quite get it. Isn't your brushwork pretty rough?"

"It's meant to be rough to convey an impression of life"

"These horses aren't particularly life like I like a horse to look like a horse."

Stephen realized that Chester had not the least idea what he was driving at "Are you still painting?"

"In my spare time I go out with Lambert occasionally Elise and he are here. He's got hold of a rich American widow and is doing a full length of her."

As he spoke, Emmy appeared from behind the caravan When she saw Chester a queer look came over her face

"What are you doing here?" she said

"I usually turn up when least expected."

"Like a bad centime?"

"This time like a good thousand franc note," Chester answered amiably. "Now don't be rude to Uncle Harry. You know his nerves are weak." He looked at his watch "I'm due at the Negresco at six. But I want you both to come tomorrow for luncheon at my apartment, 11-B Rue des Lilas. You're both free? Good. The tram goes past my door." With a smile and a wave of his cane he hailed a cab and jumped in.

On the following day, when Emmy met Stephen, she was wearing a light-yellow dress of embroidered muslin and a ribbon of the same colour round her short bushy hair. She gave him her little tight-lipped smile. "How do I look?"

"Wonderful."

"I bought this frock this morning. I like to show that Chester that I am not something beneath his feet."

"Oh, Harry's not a bad sort. He can't help being a bit spoiled. A lot of silly women have fallen for his blue eyes."

"At least I'm not one of them."

"No. I'm really rather relieved that you dislike him." He pressed her hand—she let him hold it for a moment.

CHESTER'S pleasant apartment in the Rue des Lilas opened upon a balcony round a courtyard where a fountain trickled and oleanders flowered in green tubs. He greeted them effusively. "Welcome to the ancestral château. It's not large, but it has a history."

"A bad one, no doubt," said Emmy.

Chester laughed. He was wearing white flannel trousers and a blue blazer with brass buttons. His thick brown hair had a lighter streak running back from his brow.

While he took Emmy to the bedroom to leave her scarf and gloves, Stephen glanced round the small living-room. On the walls were two framed water colours which he recognized as Lambert's work. As Stephen gazed at them, he wondered how he could ever have been taken in by such mere prettiness. They were devoid of vitality, utterly meaningless. They made him realize how long a road he had travelled since those first days in Paris.

"Good, aren't they?" Chester had returned with Emmy. "How about a drink?" He poured out three glasses of Dubonnet just as the bell rang and the Lamberts came in.

Philip, who had grown stouter, more languid in his manner, wore a grey suit with a pink carnation in his buttonhole. He stretched out on the divan, and delicately put his thin nostrils to the flower in his lapel. "Now tell me everything, dear boy."

Stephen began a brief account of himself but before he had gone far he saw that Lambert was not attending.

"You know, Desmonde," Philip's tone was amused, "you can't attack art with a pickaxe. Do as I do and use a little delicacy, a little skill. I never overwork myself yet I never want for a client."

Chester's announcement that luncheon was ready saved Stephen from a reply. The meal sent up from an hotel nearby was admirable and, early on, Harry had popped the cork from a bottle of Veuve Clicquot. But the gayer the party became, the more Stephen felt out of it. He no longer belonged in this society. Lambert, whom he had once admired, he now saw as a poseur and dilettante; Elise as a complaisant partner in the game of artistic bluff.

After coffee, they sat out upon the balcony. Continuing to monopolize the conversation, Lambert described the facial and social deficiencies of the elderly woman he was at present painting.

"I imagine her cheque was good," Stephen said stiffly.

Lambert looked pained. Taking advantage of the lull in the conversation Stephen looked at Emmy. "I'm afraid we must go now."

"Oh, nonsense," Chester protested. "The afternoon's young."

"If I don't I shall be late for my job."

"Then why don't you stay, Emmy? I'll take you back later."

She hesitated, then shook her head. "No. I'll go now."

Downstairs, they got into a cab. Stephen leaned towards her. "It was good of you to come away with me."

"I don't care to make myself cheap."

It was not the answer he had hoped for; nevertheless, he drew closer to her and sought her hand. But she pushed him away pettishly.

THE CIRQUE PEROZ found it agreeable to be settled in their winter quarters on the Côte d'Azur. The schedule had been reduced to five performances a week and Monday and Tuesday were free

Stephen, settled in the new routine, had begun the design for a painting wherein he meant to utilize the individual studies made in the big tent, and which he proposed to name *Circus*.

Since the day of the luncheon, the barometer of Emmy's moods had turned fair. They had seen nothing more of Chester or the Lamberts, and Stephen was gratified that she should accept the abrupt severance of this friendship with so little concern. She had found an interest in Lunel, near Nice, where Madame Armande's sister kept a millinery

establishment. Emmy, like most French girls, had a talent for the needle, and every afternoon she went off in the tram, to earn some pin money in the workroom of "The Straw Hat." As a result Stephen saw even less of her than usual. Yet he derived comfort from this unexpectedly sedate aspect of her nature, though he told himself such work must be dull for her. He discovered that a touring operatic company was giving a performance of *La Bohème* on the following Monday. This romance of student life in Paris might entertain her, and at their next meeting he brought the subject up.

"Will you come to the theatre on Monday?"

She seemed at a loss. "Aren't you busy on your picture?"

"Not at night."

"Well . . . if you like."

Monday came. When he had finished his session at the booth he put on his suit and a clean shirt. Just as he was ready she appeared. He was arrested by the expression of regret on her face.

"What's wrong?"

"I can't come with you tonight. Madame Armande's sister is down with *la grippe*. I must go to sit with her."

"Madame Armande can go."

"Ah, but there is a rush order to be got out."

"Well . . . I suppose it can't be helped." He was badly cast down.

"I am sorry." She gave his arm a little condoling pat. "Some other evening perhaps."

Her air of concern softened his disappointment. Nevertheless, as he watched her hurry off, his dejection was so apparent that Jo-jo, observing him, strolled over.

"You're all dressed up. Where are you off to?"

"The theatre. Come with me. It's *La Bohème*."

"Opera? Not me. But let's have a drink."

They went across the square to a nearby café. It was a cheap but pleasant place with long benches and tables running out to the pavement. In the dim interior a mechanical piano was playing, and people were sitting in their shirt sleeves.

"What's your poison, Abbé?"

"Anything . . . vermouth."

When the drinks were brought by a strapping full-breasted young

woman, Jo-jo said: "There's a wench for you." He took a gulp of his Pernod. "Name's Suzie. Why don't you try your luck?"

"Oh, go to the devil."

Jo-jo laughed. "That's better. Trouble with you, Abbé, you never let yourself go. You ought to get drunk, have a good time."

"I've tried that. It doesn't work with me."

"There's a tea dance every afternoon at the Negresco. Very high class. It might be interesting to go there." There was an odd inflection in Jo-jo's voice but Stephen shook his head.

Jo-jo threw up his hands resignedly. Then he said:

"What's happened to the bicycle beauty?"

"She had to go to Madame Armande's sister. She's sick."

"Ah." Jo-jo nodded. "An errand of mercy. Mademoiselle Nightingale the second." He shrugged slightly.

At seven o'clock Jo-jo went off to feed his horses. Stephen felt more cheerful. The evening was fine—it would be a shame to spend it in a stuffy theatre. Suddenly he was struck by an idea. Why not make the trip to Lunel, find the Armande shop, wait until Emmy had completed her work and bring her back? With luck they might be in time to have supper together. He found a northbound tram. It was not yet eight o'clock when he reached Lunel, which was little more than a collection of small new stucco villas. Stephen went up and down the street without finding "The Straw Hat." Puzzled, he made inquiries which revealed that there was no hat shop in Lunel.

Stephen rode back to Nice on the bumpy tram. It was quite dark when he got to the circus grounds. Everything was quiet and deserted. He had an impulse to go to her quarters and find out if she had returned, but pride restrained him. He went into his caravan, lay down on his bunk and closed his eyes. He would have it out with her in the morning.

ON THE following day at eleven o'clock she appeared on her wagon steps, in a blue-and-white cotton dressing-gown. She sat down on the top step, holding a cup of coffee. He went over.

"Good morning . . . how did you find your patient?"

"Oh, fairly well. I told you it was the grippe."

"Isn't that rather infectious? You must be careful."

"I can take care of myself."

"Really, I'm serious . . . there's a sharp wind out at Lunel. And one has to wait such a long time for the tram."

She looked at him suspiciously over the rim of the cup. "What do you know about Lunel?"

"I was out there last evening. I thought I might buy you a hat. Unfortunately I couldn't find a hat shop."

"Who the devil do you think you are, pushing your nose into other people's business? Spying on me. You dirty sneak."

"At least I'm not a liar."

"Who do you call a liar? What I told you was the truth. And now perhaps you'll shove off and let me have my breakfast in peace."

He felt that she was lying—her very vehemence was suspicious. Yet it was just possible that she spoke the truth. He wanted with all his soul to believe her.

"I was looking forward so much to our evening together. . . ."

"That's no excuse."

"Anyhow, let's both forget it."

"Only if you apologize for what you called me."

He hesitated, but his need of her made him abject. "I'm sorry if I offended you." The words made him feel contemptible. He knew he could not go on like this, he must make certain.

Next day, after lunch, as she went towards the Place Pigalle, he followed. He had always despised the jealous man who spied upon the woman he loved. Now he could not help himself. At the Pigalle terminus he saw her take a tram bound for the promenade, and as another was on the point of leaving he boarded it. In fifteen minutes he was at the sea front. He walked the length of the esplanade and back, made a tour of the Casino, but could see no sign of her. Then he suddenly recollected Jo-jo's manner when he spoke of the tea dance at the Negresco. He crossed the street and gazed through the gilt-tipped railings into the covered terrace of the hotel. An orchestra was playing a two-step to which a number of couples were dancing. Then another couple stepped on to the floor. The girl was smiling as she extended her arms to her partner. They glided off together—Chester and Emmy.

With an expressionless face, Stephen watched them. So expert was their exhibition they were allowed to monopolize the floor, and when they finally sat down they received applause.

Stephen walked slowly to a bench from which he could see the hotel entrance. The pain in his heart was almost unbearable. How she and Chester must have laughed together at his fatuous belief that she was modestly plying her needle, while all the time she had been with Harry. Madame Armande had undoubtedly spread word of the burlesque throughout the troupe. Certainly Jo-jo knew. What a fool he must have thought him.

Yet greater even than Stephen's mortification and rage was his frantic jealousy. He still wanted her. And as he sat there with his head between his hands, he tried to find excuses for her. After all, she was only dancing with Harry, and that surely was no crime.

At last, as dusk fell and strings of coloured lights flashed on along the front of the hotel, Harry and Emmy appeared, and came along the promenade. Talking animatedly, they passed so close to him he could have hailed them. When they were fifty yards ahead he got up and followed.

A short distance beyond the Casino they turned up a side street and entered a small restaurant. Dinner for two, thought Stephen grimly. He buttoned his coat collar and posted himself in a doorway opposite. Only his need to discover the truth enabled him to maintain that weary and degrading vigil.

It was ten o'clock before Emmy and Chester emerged and got into a hansom cab. As they moved off, Stephen jumped into another cab, told the man to follow. With a sinking heart, he saw that they were heading towards Chester's apartment. At the end of the Rue des Lilas Stephen dismissed his cab. Farther along the quiet thoroughfare the other vehicle had drawn up; its two occupants were disappearing into the courtyard. Slowly, Stephen came forward and gazed up at Chester's balcony apartment. The light in one room was on; he could see the two figures moving behind the yellow blind. Then the light went out.

How long Stephen stood there, staring at the dark apartment, he could not tell. At last he turned and walked away.

He was back at the circus grounds before midnight. Without awakening Jo-jo and the Croc, he packed his belongings in his saddle-bag, strapped his canvases upon his back and, with a last look at his companions, pushed off on his bicycle.

He rode north, towards Auvergne. He felt the need to rejoin Peyrat,

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who must still be there. But mainly he was pressed forward by the desire to obliterate the memory of these last insufferable weeks. He snatched a meal when he could and slept behind haystacks, in deserted cowsheds, avoiding all human contact.

On Sunday morning, as he came on to a high plateau, a cold wet wind was blowing from the Alps, and soon rain began to fall. Crouched under a dripping hedge by the road, eating the remains of his food, he felt homeless, unreal as a ghost. The rain continued but he went on, more slowly, with a shortness of breath that caused him to dismount upon the steeper inclines.

Towards noon he began to feel extremely queer. He would never reach Auvergne in this fashion; he must get to a railway. He looked at

his map and saw that by heading west he could reach the junction at Digne. He set off on a crossroad. This was wilder, more difficult than before. The rain rapidly increased, and presently a deluge was upon him. Wet through, with darkness rapidly descending, he became alarmed, lit his carbide lamp and again consulted the map. Tracing with his finger, he saw he was on a dead-end track.

A fit of panic shook him, but he pedalled on, bent forward against the wind. A salt taste came into his mouth and, pressing his handkerchief against his lips, he felt it grow wet. His legs no longer belonged to him, a hammer was thumping in his head, but when he felt that he could go no farther he saw in the hollow before him the wavering lights of a hamlet.

Completely spent, he let his machine fall and stumbled up the path of the first cottage. The door was opened by a child, who stared at him, then turned and ran. They must take me in, he thought, I am going to be ill. . . .

A workman in a blue shirt came to the door, followed by a woman carrying a lamp. The woman gave an exclamation.

"Terribly sorry." With tremendous difficulty, he brought out the words. "Lost my way. Can you put me up?"

"Not here," the man said. "You must go along." He took Stephen by the shoulder, steered him from the house. Believing that he was being thrown out on the road, Stephen felt a dry smarting behind his eyes. Then he realized the man was supporting him in a dizzy passage down the street. As they advanced he murmured encouragement. "See, it's not far, we are nearly there."

They reached a large building with thick trees on either side. The man rang a bell. After a moment, a grille opened in the studded door and then they were admitted to a whitewashed hall with a bare stone floor and benches round the walls. Stephen gazed giddily about him. A hooded monk appeared, and the workman from the cottage, turning towards this new arrival, removed his sustaining arm. Stephen fell forward on his face, the bundle of sopping canvases still strapped on his back.

THE MORNING SUN, slanting through the deep-set window, awakened him. He lay passive, his gaze travelling over the single straw-bottomed

chair, the wardrobe, the wooden *prie-dieu* in the corner, the black crucifix on the white wall.

A light footstep on the sanded corridor outside caused him to turn his head. The Infirmary entered, carrying his breakfast on a tray. "How did you sleep?"

"Very well."

"Good." Placing the tray on the chair, Dom Arthaud produced a thermometer from the recesses of his white habit and put it between Stephen's lips. He was a man of about fifty, sturdy and square-shouldered, with a broad, pleasant face and intelligent brown eyes. His head was tonsured; he wore sandals upon his bare feet. At the end of a minute he removed the thermometer, read it, then pushed the chair and tray up to the bed.

Stephen began his breakfast—a bowl of *café-au-lait*, fresh butter in an earthenware bowl, sliced bread and fruit. He looked up at the monk.

"Won't you share this with me? There's enough for two."

"On no account. We have our meal at noon. And I have not been ill."

"I've meant to ask you . . . what was the matter with me?"

"You had an inflammation of the lung and you overstrained yourself. As a result you had a hæmorrhage." He paused. "Have you suffered anything of that nature before?"

Stephen shook his head. "I had a cold some months ago. But it couldn't have come from that?"

"It would not be proper for me to answer. I am not a doctor."

"You pulled me through all right."

"With God's help." Dom Arthaud took up the empty tray. "You are to be up today, but do not rise just yet. The Reverend Prior is coming to visit you."

When he had gone Stephen settled back. His cough was almost gone and he no longer had the stabbing pain in his side. How good the sun felt on his cheek—the stirrings of convalescence had begun. Indeed, he wondered if his illness, with its strange depletion, had not been opportune. It had cured him of the pangs which had tormented him.

Looking back, he was amazed that for all these months he should have grovelled for Emmy's favour. He rejoiced to be himself again, and solemnly vowed that in future no woman would have any part in his life. His work alone would concern him.



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AT ELEVEN o'clock the Superior, a tall commanding figure in his white hooded robe, arrived, and studied Stephen gravely. "I am glad you are at last to leave your bed, my son."

"And I am grateful," Stephen answered. "Besides, it's high time I was clearing out. I have given you a vast amount of trouble."

"On the contrary, you are most welcome to stay Dom Arthaud thinks it will be several weeks before you are fit to travel "

"But . . I'm afraid I couldn't pay "

"Have we asked you for money, my son? Stay with us for a while Sit in the sunshine in the garden When you are stronger you will be better able to face the world " The Prior rose and went out

Stephen had to struggle to force back the tears He got up, and when he was dressed he left his room and went along a stone flagged corridor to the garden at the back It was not large, a few paths laid out round some straggling rose beds led to a grotto, with a statue at the far end He knew the monks had built with their own hands the small chapel which stood white against the fleecy sky Presently a service began in the chapel. He got up from the bench where he sat and crawled back to his room.

There he saw a letter, placed upon the narrow window ledge About a week before he had scrawled a few lines to the tenant of 15 Rue Castel, asking him to forward his mail He tore open the envelope It was from Stillwater, dated two months previously

Dear Stephen,

If this ever reaches you it will inform you of the death of Lady Broughton, in October. Some weeks before, the engagement of Claire and Geoffrey was announced They are to be married quite soon There is no other news except to say that Father continues to be most unhappy at your absence. I beg you to return and accept your responsibilities as a dutiful son.

Yours,
Caroline

He had known of Lady Broughton's illness, and his fondness for Claire had never been more than a brotherly affection. Yet this word from home, with its implied reproaches, seemed to cut him off more sharply from that pleasant life which normally would still be his. Caroline's letter made him feel a creature apart.

As the week passed he grew stronger. One day, as he watched the novices playing handball, a remark, half laughing, half serious, was addressed to him. "Monsieur Desmonde, since you are an artist, why don't you paint a fine picture for our church?"

"Why not?" Stephen answered, with a serious air. The idea struck him as an admirable way of expressing his gratitude and relieving his enforced idleness.

That afternoon he spoke to the Superior. At first the Prior hesitated. The chapel was dear to his heart. Would it be wise to place it in the hands of an unknown painter whose few canvases, while strangely compelling, gave no evidence of orthodox proficiency?

"Tell me, my son, what you propose to do."

"I should like to paint a fresco above the altar on the end wall of the apse. I thought of the Transfiguration."

"Could you produce something of which we would approve?"

"I would try. I have no pigments, no brushes large enough. You would have to get these for me. You would have to take me on trust. But if you do so, I promise to do my best."

Next morning two of the fathers departed for Garonde, returning in the evening with various brown paper packages. Meanwhile, the novices had erected a light wooden scaffolding behind the altar. With that excitement which he always experienced at the beginning of a work, Stephen took up his brush.

The atmosphere of the chapel induced in him emotions quite foreign to his nature. The work came into being with surprising ease. He blocked in the central figure of the Lord and outlined the features of Moses and Elias. His colours, usually so hard, were soft and flat; his forms seemed disturbingly conventional. Yet against his doubts of the work was the growing approval of the community. Often as he turned on the scaffold to clean his brushes he would observe in the eyes of some novice who had come in to pray a look of rapture. Was not that reassurance enough? The fresco was finished within three weeks.

"My son," the Prior said to Stephen, "now I know that your coming here was providential. This fresco will endure beyond the lifetime of all of us. We are most deeply in your debt. Tomorrow we shall celebrate a High Mass to consecrate your work."

Next morning the altar was ablaze with candles. The Superior, assisted

by Dom Arthaud, sang the Mass while the choir chanted the responses, and the painting glowed in the candlelight.

After the ceremony the porter came to Stephen with a queer expression. "There is a visitor to see you. A gentleman who says he has come to take you back to Paris."

Stephen went to his room. There, reclining on the bed puffing furiously at his pipe, was Peyrat. He jumped up, kissed Stephen on both cheeks "What have you been up to? A dozen times I have tried to reach you. An announcement was made last month which has caused me to chase after you all over France."

"What on earth are you driving at?"

"An announcement," Peyrat continued, rolling the words over his tongue, "which will put a medal on your breast, fifteen hundred francs in your pocket, and permit us to take our trip to Spain." He threw his arms round Stephen and once again kissed him. "Your *Crice* has won you the Prix de Luxembourg."



Chapter Nine

ON A grey afternoon early in June 1914 Stephen came along the fashionable Rue St. Honoré towards the Place Vendôme. He had been to the Soulat auction rooms, where Peyrat had sent ten of his paintings to pay his share of the expenses of their Spanish expedition. The first of Peyrat's original and imaginative canvases had caused a faint titter, the second a ripple of amusement, and by the time the final canvas was exhibited the crowd was laughing heartily. The entire ten were knocked down to the same unknown buyer for a total of four hundred and eighty francs. Stephen remained behind to question the clerk.

The ten paintings had been secured by an agent of the art dealer Tessier.

"Why did he go after these?" asked Stephen grimly.

The clerk shrugged. "What one buys today for fifty francs one may sell in ten years' time for fifty thousand . . . if one is Tessier."

Stephen left the office saying some bad words to himself. Then, passing opposite the stuffy portals of the Clifton Hotel, he smiled reflectively.

Suddenly his expression altered. Advancing towards him, from the hotel, was his uncle Hubert. With set features, convinced that General Desmonde would cut him, Stephen went on. However, he was wrong—Hubert halted.

"Stephen." He did not extend his hand. "This is fortunate. I thought I might have to reach you at the Rue Castel. I very much want to see you, and I suppose you'd like news of home."

"How is my father?"

"Fairly well. They all seem to be. Davie's quite a tall chap now and quite recovered from those unfortunate attacks. My lot are pretty fit, too. Geoffrey and Claire nicely settled." He shot a glance under his brows. "Claire is expecting a child in the summer."

"You hope for a boy, of course?"

Stephen's satiric lightness caused General Desmonde to compress his lips. He looked at him steadily.

"You must come home, Stephen. If not for your family, for your country. There is going to be war. In a matter of weeks Germany will attack Britain. We shall need every available man."

Stephen, understanding at last what was in Hubert's mind, experienced a deepening resentment. How often in the past had the General given false warning of the imminence of war! It was an obsession with him.

"I am afraid I must disappoint you. I am not coming home."

"I see." Hubert's voice was cold. "You intend to continue slouching about here in indolence and dissipation?"

"Would it surprise you to know that I work twelve hours a day? I'll wager I work harder at my art than you ever did on the parade ground."

"Your art!" Hubert's lip curled. "What rot!"

"Is it absurd to be concerned only with what is beautiful, and not with the business of killing people? We artists are the ones who matter to the world—the works of the great artists will be cherished long after all your bloody conquests are forgotten."

The General, extremely angry, bit his lip. "I refuse to argue. You are British and a Desmonde. At a time like this you can't get away with daubing paint on canvas. You must come home."

"And I refuse." Preserving a faint, fixed smile which more than anything enraged his uncle, Stephen went on his way.

THE BIARRITZ express was on the point of departure. Stephen stood outside his compartment, awaiting Peyrat with increasing anxiety. Just as the whistle sounded, he observed a familiar figure, walking calmly up the platform, wearing a dilapidated coat, carrying an escel and a carpet-bag of terrifying antiquity.

They got into the moving train in the nick of time, and when they had found places Peyrat turned to Stephen with a smile which irradiated his unshaven face. "You must forgive me. I am late. In the Metro a young curé engaged me in conversation on the subject of the Discalced Rule of Sainte Thérèse."

His soft voice and affectionate manner, so polite, gentle and gay, made Stephen relent.

"A fine thing if you had been left behind."

"My friend," Peyrat said, "do not reproach me for pursuing so fascinating a subject." He added, after a moment of thought, "Poverty will save the world."

"Poverty will not save us. I have got your money from the Soulat auction and we have only nineteen hundred francs between us."

"Divide it equally," said Peyrat calmly. "Or if you wish, let me have it all. I will be our treasurer." Then, pointing to his carpet bag, "I've got a Bayonne ham there, given me by Madame Huffnaegel. We shall not starve."

The train gathered speed through the outer suburbs, and remembering how excellently Peyrat had managed in the Rue Castel, Stephen, never any good with money, handed over the packet of bank notes. Accepting this placidly, Jerome stuffed it in his bulging wallet, full of frayed documents and held together with string. Then he studied his companion.

"You seem depressed, my friend. Has anything upset you?"

"No," said Stephen; then, on impulse, "Someone wanted to make a soldier of me."

Peyrat sucked meditatively on the cold stem of his pipe. "Monstrous. In the days of chivalry the knights engaged in battle of their own free will. It was sport to them and all they were good for. No one dreamed of sending a poet or a philosopher to battle."

Stephen listened with a smile, quite cheered up. How good it was to be travelling with so original a friend, always naively happy and, while sometimes absurd, yet on occasion so wise.

THEY reached Madrid late the following afternoon and found two modest rooms in a poor neighbourhood adjoining the fruit market. Peyrat, in bad Spanish, arranged the terms and paid for a week's lodging in advance.

On the morning after their arrival Stephen roused Jerome. "Seven o'clock. We ought to get to the Prado early."

Peyrat, supported by an elbow, considered his companion with indulgence. "Nothing is early in this country. The Prado does not open until nine thirty. In any case I am not going."

"Then why have we come to Madrid?"

"To enable you to view the Prado. But there is little point in my going. What others have done does not influence me."

"Not even the great masters?"

"I am perhaps a master myself," Peyrat said simply. "Besides, I am going to Avila, the birthplace of Thérèse."

Stephen felt annoyed by this unexpected desertion. He drained his cup and got up. "I'm off now."

"I shall be absent for some days," Peyrat said. "How are you situated for money?"

"I have about thirty pesetas," Stephen answered shortly. "I don't expect to be dining at the Ritz."

"Then that should suffice till I return." Peyrat nodded gravely. "*Adios, amigo.*"

As STEPHEN entered the Prado, the long galleries were empty except for a few copyists. He felt within him an answering glow as he came upon El Greco and Velasquez, but it was the end gallery that drew him. This, he thought, with a tremor of instinctive delight, is my painter, this at last is Goya. Never before had he seen work so passionate, charged with such devastating truth. The glutton, the toper, the voluptuary, all were here in savage caricatures. Here, created by this simple man from Aragon, was a world filled with all the frightfulness of human brutality, yet leavened by tenderness and pity—the compassionate protest of a man appalled by the oppression, superstition and hypocrisy of his day.

It was evening when Stephen was ousted from the museum. The cafés were crowded now, the pavements overflowed with people slowly promenading. It was the time of the *paseo*. All classes, all ages were

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there. Stephen could pick out faces that seemed to come straight from Goya's drawings.

During the next three days he applied himself with intensity to his study of these drawings in the Prado. Despite this, he missed Peyrat. It was therefore with a throb of pleasure that, on the evening of the fourth day, while sketching from memory, he heard a familiar footstep. A moment later Jerome entered dramatically with the carpet bag, flung back his woollen shawl and embraced him.

"You enjoyed Avila?"

"Surpassing my expectation. I stood on the very spot where Thérèse was born. The house was in the ghetto of the town."

"You visited the convent of her order?"

"Naturally. It is falling to pieces, and infested with rats. However, I was happy."

"Have you had supper?"

"I ate some indescribable provisions on the train. Ah, it is good to be with you. And tomorrow we shall be off again."

"But we planned to stay another two weeks in Madrid."

"Ah, what is Madrid! Besides, we have our railway tickets to Granada. Once in Granada, we shall buy a donkey and a little cart and set out by road for Seville."

"Set out by road?" Stephen echoed the words stupidly.

"Assuredly. We shall be pilgrims of joy, singing on our way, begging if need be, living off the land."

"Are you quite out of your mind?" Stephen said sharply.

There was a pause. Peyrat murmured

"My friend, bear me no ill will. What I propose is sheer necessity. Moved by their poverty, so much greater than ours, I have given our money, except for two hundred pesetas, to the good Mother Superior of the convent in memory of Sainte Thérèse."

THROUGH the streaming windows of the station waiting-room in Granada Stephen watched the branches of a row of eucalyptus trees sway and drip in a chilly wind that swept down from the Sierra Nevada. They had arrived at four o'clock that morning. Still filled with resentment at finding all his plans dissipated at a single stroke, Stephen had let Peyrat depart alone for the town market when light appeared. Now,

through the rear window, he saw a light cart, drawn by a small donkey, approach smartly and stop at the station entrance. The rain was ceasing and he went out.

"Where did you get this?"

"From a gypsy in the market. I struck an excellent bargain." Peyrat spoke with pride. "As you see, the cart is sound. The donkey, though perhaps not large, is very hardy. His master wept on parting with him."

There was such obvious desire for a reconciliation in Jerome's voice that Stephen relented slightly. "You might have done worse."

"And look." Peyrat indicated a number of packages in the back of the cart. "Bread, bananas, cheese, wine. With our ham we have enough for a week or so."

At that moment the sun came out, warm and brilliant in the clearing sky. All at once it seemed a gay adventure to set out in this free fashion. Stephen's spirit lifted. "Let's be off."

They piled their possessions into the cart and drove away. The donkey pulled with a good heart; soon they were out of the town. Stephen, on the narrow driver's seat, breathed the warm aromatic air of orange groves with delight. Afternoon passed and twilight came. They were now beginning to ascend the foothills of the Sierra. No human habitation was in sight but a small ravine sheltered by a clump of pines seemed a suitable encampment. They unharnessed the donkey and tethered him in a patch of grass where the admirable little beast began quietly to graze. Then they ate supper. The night was soft, black and warm; pine needles carpeted the dry sand on which they stretched themselves. Almost at once Stephen was asleep.

The days that followed were delightful. Stephen and Peyrat moved without haste, spending most of each day sketching. The smell of jasmine hung in the air. At night Peyrat played the ocarina. Then with a romantic air he would seek repose, quoting the Spanish couplet:

*"I spread my cloak upon the ground
And fling myself to sleep."*

Towards the end of the second week, the mountains loomed nearer, and they began striking up a steep winding road into wild and rugged country. There was not a tree in this great barren sweep of burned and tortured rock. The sun blazed down; the ascent was precipitous. Yet

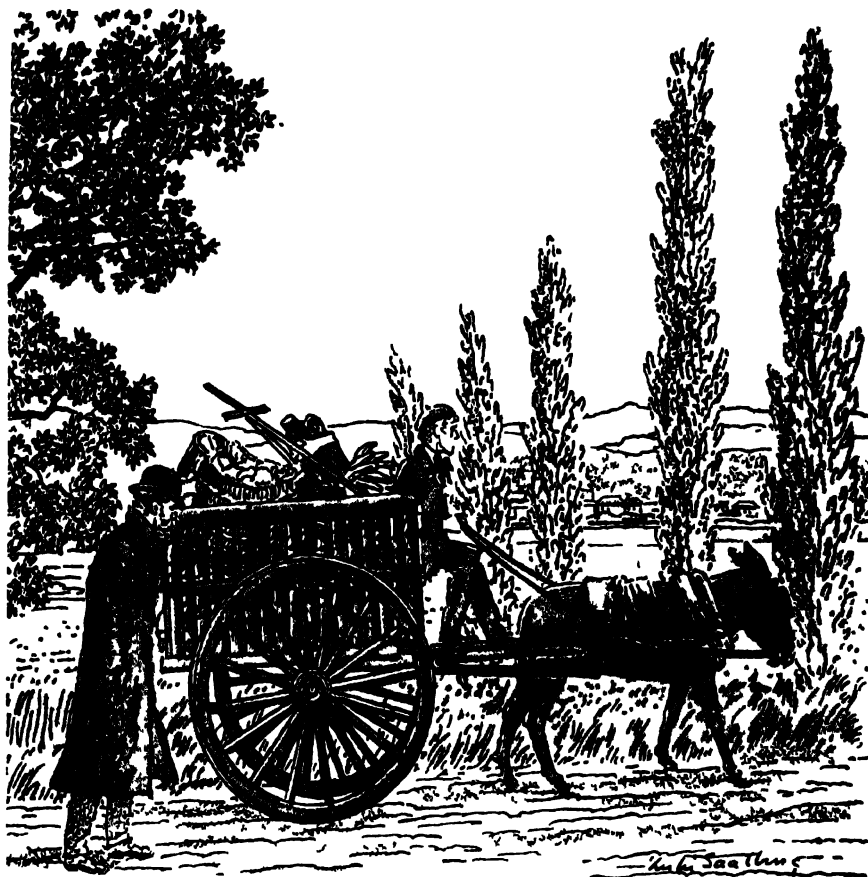
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there was no alternative but to go on. To ease their donkey they walked beside the cart. The willing little beast was showing signs of the lack of proper pasture; their provisions were exhausted. At last, on the ninth day, a village, white as a heap of petrified bones, was discernible in the distance.

Peyrat briskened. "We are certain to find an inn here. It will be a relief to have a roof over our heads again."

They entered the single narrow street of the village, where a few women in black sat on low chairs, crocheting lace. The inn was a low dilapidated house, set in a dirty yard where several donkeys were



tethered Within the dark interior some men were seated at a table drinking from a black goatskin Peyrat called the landlord and a slow, lumpish fellow with small eyes and a long, unshaven chin detached himself from the group. "My friend, we are artists, in distress. Will you, of your courtesy, afford us a meal and lodging for the night? In return we will paint your portrait, or that of your good wife."

The man gave Peyrat a prolonged stare. "We turn no one from our door. But I require no portrait and I have no wife."

"Then if you choose, we will make a sign for your inn."

"But I do not choose, señor."

"Then name something that we can do for you."

"You can enter, señor, eat well and sleep soft. But of course you must pay."

"We are without money."

The man gazed from one to the other, slyly. "Then give me something of fair value—a cloth coat or a pair of stout boots."

Jerome made a sign of assent. "The ruffian is holding us up," he muttered to Stephen. "Napoleon was right to say, 'Never trust a man with a long chin.' I shall give my boots. But only these old ones I am wearing. I have a better pair in my bag."

Supper proved to be as wretched as the inn, and it was a relief at last to escape to the hay spread in a vacant stall adjoining the stable. In the morning they set off across a parched yellow plain, relieved only by an infrequent grove of silvery olive trees and herds of dusty black goats. Stephen did not mind, for this strange lunar landscape thrilled him; but Peyrat, plodding moodily at the donkey's head, victim of his own philanthropy, was childish and disagreeable. That evening, camped beside a stony arroyo, after a mush of maize cooked in a can picked up by the wayside, he broke a dejected silence.

"These new boots, made for the pavements of Paris, are hurting my feet atrociously. Already I have a galling blister on my heel. I fear I have led you into an unfortunate situation. I mistook the nature of this countryside, which, if one can believe that rogue of a landlord, is equally poor to the west of us. Only one solution presents itself—to abandon the road to Seville. We will cut down south to the port of Málaga."

Stephen nodded his agreement, but Peyrat, socks off, was tenderly examining his heel. "My friend, I may have joined my discalced order. I seriously doubt if I shall get these boots on much longer."

THREE DAYS later when they were half-way to Málaga, the real trouble began. They had stopped to rest by the roadside in the shade of a clump of cork trees. Beside them, in the shade of the uptilted cart, the donkey stood motionless. Blackened by the sun, unshaven, Stephen had the appearance of a tramp. Peyrat, with one foot bare, had rolled up his trouser leg to the knee. He turned to Stephen. "My leg pains me. Will you look at it?"

Stephen looked casually at the leg. Then, disquieted, he examined it

more thoroughly. Although he had several times seen Peyrat dispense with the tight boots and limp along barefoot in the dust, he had never suspected that the condition had become so acute. The right foot was swollen and inflamed, the heel ulcerated.

"No more walking for you." Stephen assumed a confident tone. "It's slightly infected. Let's see what we can do about it."

He took his spare shirt from his valise, and tore off several strips. Moistening these with water, which they carried in an old wine bottle, he cleansed the raw, inflamed area as best he could and applied a loose moist bandage. "How does that feel?"

"Cool . . . in fact, somewhat easier."

Stephen harnessed the burro, assisted Peyrat to the cart and started off. He set a good pace at the donkey's head but, whenever they approached an incline, he fell behind and pushed on the tail-board. They must get to Málaga as soon as possible. Stephen had noticed with growing uneasiness that Peyrat's cheeks were flushed, and now a faint foreboding crossed his mind.

The road was favourable for the next few kilometres, and as the light began to fade they came to a large barn filled with fresh hay, which promised them not only a comfortable night but fodder for the animal. Stephen brought Peyrat inside; then, after several attempts, he caught and milked one of the goats pastured nearby. In the cart were some green cobs of maize they had picked some days before. With these he prepared a hot dish of corn and milk.

"How do you feel now?" he asked, when Jerome had eaten.

"My friend, I am deeply touched by your care."

"Yes, yes . . . but your foot?"

"It is throbbing, naturally. But after a good night's rest I shall be perfectly recovered."

But Peyrat did not rest well, and in the morning he looked definitely worse. Stephen was thoroughly alarmed. He filled the cart with hay, made Peyrat as comfortable as possible on this improvised couch, and hastened to be off. The donkey, refreshed and fed, went with a will. If only they could reach Málaga before dark, Stephen thought, he would go immediately to the British consulate for help. He drove forward still harder, only stopping occasionally to give Peyrat a drink of water. Jerome's skin was hot with fever.

As the afternoon passed and the granite boulders that studded the landscape cast shadows on the dusty earth, a sense of helplessness struck at Stephen. His gallant little beast, flanks sodden and heaving, head drooping, was almost spent and they were still far from the coast. At his wits' end he gazed desperately about him. All at once, at the end of a rough track, he saw a small, white house with an adjoining thatched hut standing in a patch of wasteland. As he drew near, a woman came out of the low doorway, her head a little to one side, as though listening to his approach.

She was about sixty years old, dressed in worn black, with a heavy figure and a face almost Negroid in its darkness. Her eyes were strangely opaque, and Stephen saw in the centre of each pupil the yellowish blight of trachoma. But it was the placidity of that sightless face which most truly revealed that she was blind.

"Señora." The word came raspingly from his dry throat "We are strangers, travelling to Málaga. My friend is ill. I entreat you to give us shelter for the night."

She stood motionless, her hands crossed before her. It was as if, through some vibration in the air, she sought to discover the nature and character of these unknown visitors. Then she turned, led the way to the hut and opened the door.

"This may serve you." She made a gesture with her hands "There is a place for your burro behind "

The shock of this sudden security was such that Stephen was unable to utter a word of thanks. It was a poor room, but clean, the floor of beaten earth. A table and a wooden chair stood under a hanging oil lamp. In the far corner, on a wooden trestle, was a flock mattress. He helped Peyrat out of the cart and, almost carrying him, on to the low bed. He washed the dust from his face and got him into a clean shirt. Next he stabled the donkey, giving it fresh water and all the hay that remained in the cart. As he returned to the hut he met the woman carrying an earthenware bowl filled with thick bean soup.

"Take this for your supper. It may help your friend."

"Your kindness leaves me without words. Believe me, we had need of your help."

"If you are worse off than I, then you are badly off indeed."

"You live alone here?"

"Completely. But I manage. I grow these beans. I exist."

Then, as he remained silent, she turned slowly and left him.

He took the soup to Peyrat, but Jerome had turned irritable and kept pushing the spoon away. Nor would he permit Stephen to examine his leg. He will never be fit to travel in the cart tomorrow, thought Stephen, nor will the burro be fit to move. Then he thought: I must not waste the soup. Seated at the table, his harassed gaze fixed on the sick man, who lay muttering in his half-sleep, he drank it quickly. Presently, with the empty bowl, he went to the door of the house. The woman answered his knock.

"Is it a far distance to Málaga?"

"Yes, it is far. More than ten kilometres."

Ten kilometres . . . He could walk that distance in three hours and, by starting at dawn, reach the consulate before nine o'clock. "Señora, I must go to Málaga early tomorrow. I shall leave my friend, also the burro, but have no fear, I shall return soon after noon. Is such an arrangement agreeable to you?"

In some strange fashion she seemed to measure him with her sightless eyes. "It is agreeable. But do not call me señora. My name is Luisa Mendez. And do not speak to me of fear. I have long passed the stage of having fear."

He went back to the hut and, after a last look at Peyrat, lay down on the beaten floor.

NEXT MORNING, as he crossed the last summit and came down the steep incline towards Málaga, Stephen felt a sudden gleam of hope. Hastening through the outskirts, he made his way towards the main square. He began to sense a singular stir in the streets. Men were standing in groups around the cafés talking and gesticulating, and a large crowd had collected outside the offices of the newspaper *Gaceta de la Caleta*. Stephen spoke to a man on the edge of the gathering. "Friend, what is the reason for this assembly?"

"Why, man, we are waiting for the next edition of the paper, for news of the war."

Observing the look of stupefaction on Stephen's face, he offered the folded newspaper which he carried in his hand. "This is yesterday's."

The sheet was dated August 7, 1914. The smudged headlines struck

Stephen like a blow and he recollected all that Hubert had said to him in Paris. With an expression of thanks he hurried off to the consulate.

The door there was open and, as Stephen entered, he found the hall and staircase already crowded. Many of the people ahead of him were tourists, more upset by the interruption of their holiday than by any premonition of world disaster. They chattered, even joked, as the queue moved slowly forward.

When an official emerged from the room on the right, Stephen stepped forward. He said, rapidly

"May I speak with you? It's a matter of importance."

With an exclamation of annoyance the official looked at Stephen. He was under thirty, with thinning hair and a fair complexion. His gaze travelled with distaste over the dusty, worn boots, the dingy shirt, then a faint look of recognition appeared upon his face. Pleasantly he said, "Why . . . yes." He led the way into a small office. "Sit down, won't you? I'm George Hollis."

"My name is Desmonde."

The other smiled. "Now I remember. You came up to Trinity in '09. That was my last year. I felt sure we'd met."

Stephen shook the proffered hand. Then he said: "I hate to impose on you at a time like this."

Hollis waved away the apology.

"I understand. We all want to get back in double quick time to get into the show. Tell me, what are you doing out here?"

"I've been on a painting trip, with a friend——"

"Ah, sort of walking tour. Now, let me see." He consulted a paper. "We're practically off our heads trying to get people home. The frontier is closed so trains are impossible. But there's a freighter leaving soon. By pulling a few strings we may get you a berth on her."

"Thank you." Stephen was desperate to come to the point. "In the meantime, could I tax your goodness further? My friend is seriously ill. I must get him a good doctor."

"Dr. Cabra, in the Calle Estada, would be your man. I'll give you a note to him." Hollis wrote on the consulate notepaper, pushed the envelope across the desk.

"You are really too kind. I'm grateful." Stephen spoke with feeling. "When may I see you again?"

"Look in any time. I ought to have news for you in a few days." He stood up with a smile. "We might dine together one evening before you go."

STEPHEN found the Calle Estada without difficulty. A servant admitted him, and accepted his letter. A few moments later the doctor appeared. He was a youngish man, small, dapper, with a round, smooth, saffron face in which his sloe-dark eyes seemed to twinkle with perpetual good nature.

As briefly as possible, Stephen explained the situation. The little doctor looked thoughtful. Then, after questioning Stephen on one or two points, he nodded. "Impossible to treat your friend at such a distance. We must bring him into the hospital. We shall requisition the hospital ambulance and proceed together."

"Then we may leave at once?"

"When I have had breakfast. Come and join me." As he showed Stephen into a small, panelled sitting room where coffee and rolls were set out on a tray, he added "I have been on a case most of the night. Such fun to bring a fine boy into the world. And such joy for the mother."

"It was a first baby?"

"Oh, no, no. The tenth. And all alive and healthy."

He sent for another cup, poured coffee for Stephen, proffered the platter of rolls. Then he began his own meal, talking almost continuously, deploring the war, but predicting its speedy ending, discoursing on the beauty of Málaga, the excellent climate. Finally he said: "If you had not come to me for your friend I should have suspected that you were the patient. You are much underweight and you have a cough."

"It is nothing."

"So it is nothing. Well then, smile a little, for a change."

Stephen reddened. "I daresay I am anxious about my friend."

Cabra leaned forward and pressed Stephen's hand.

"We shall do our best for him."

They left the house and in five minutes were at the Casa de Socorro, the emergency hospital, where the ambulance, a field model with a canvas top, stood in the cobbled yard. The doctor cranked the engine and presently they were moving out of the town at a surprisingly good

pace. Cabra drove with incredible lack of caution, but as the dust clouds billowed behind them the road Stephen had tramped that morning steadily diminished. Presently they were bumping across the wasteland to the house of Luisa Mendez. In the hut, Peyrat was lying on his back, a compress on his forehead. Seated at the table, wringing out a fresh cloth in a bowl of water, was Luisa. Stephen went to the bed.

"Jerome, I've brought the doctor. How have you been?"

"I have been suffering." His eyes, bright in his furrowed, yellow face, turned suspiciously towards Cabra. "But now I am mending rapidly, thanks to the ministrations of this good woman. Though I admit to a painful ringing in my ears. Indeed, because of that," Peyrat raised himself upon his elbow, speaking through dry, cracked lips, "I have been reflecting upon the subject of bells . . . their immense variety. . . ."

"*Amigo*," Cabra placed a restraining hand on Peyrat's shoulder, "be silent and permit me to examine you."

Peyrat closed his eyes and sank back, exhausted, submitting while the doctor took his pulse and temperature.

"Does your leg still hurt?"

"No," said Peyrat, feebly but with a triumphant air, not opening his eyes. "It is absolutely without pain."

Stephen saw the doctor's expression alter.

"Ah, then perhaps we may look at it." Cabra turned down the blanket, removed the dressing and made his investigation. When he straightened, he said with false cheerfulness, "Well, *amigo*, don't you think it time you were in a comfortable bed? We have one for you at the San Miguel."

Peyrat moved his lips in protest. Stephen could see that his imaginative, childish soul was struck with fear.

"I'll come with you," Stephen said to him.

"No." The doctor was emphatic. "If you are not careful, you too will be ill. Stay here and rest."

"When shall I come? Tomorrow morning?"

"Let us say the day after tomorrow."

"Then you are hopeful?" Stephen asked in a low voice.

Cabra looked away. "The leg is in a serious condition. The foot is probably gangrenous. If he is to live something must be done at once. But, rest assured, we shall do it."

On the stretcher, Peyrat kept his eyes tightly shut, murmuring in-

coherent phrases. But as the moment of departure arrived he signed to Stephen. "Let me have my ocarina."

He was clutching it as, slowly and with considerable care, Cabra drove off. Stephen stood there a long time, watching. The blind woman, in a posture of listening, stood beside him

EARLY next morning, the sun struck through a rent in the sacking that served for the window of the hut. It awoke Stephen, who had slept as one dead. He got up in a mood of sick wretchedness. The old woman was at the dome shaped oven in the yard, drawing from its blackened mouth a flat loaf of bread. As he approached, without turning her head, she broke the new loaf and handed him a piece, still steaming and damp. It seemed as though with every other faculty than sight she saw him, sounded the depth of his distress. Suddenly she said

"You are thinking of the other?"

"Yes."

"Have you known him long?"

"Long enough to call him my friend. I have much anxiety for him."

"It will pass." There was a grave fatalism in her voice. "Work is the best cure for sadness. I have need of brushwood for this oven. Usually I bring it from the clearing beyond the valley."

He went to the stable. The donkey was glad to see him, rubbing its muzzle against his shoulder. He harnessed it to the cart, then took a rusted machete from a hook beside the stall and started out across the arroyo to the place Luisa had indicated. There, while the donkey began to nibble the leaves of the briars and bushes, Stephen took off his shirt and set to work. The machete was old and blunt, but with a kind of desperate intensity he slashed at the tough scrub, trying to stifle the images that crowded in upon him.

Yet he did not succeed. When he wrenched his thoughts from Pevrat, they turned towards the war. At this moment men were killing and being killed. Recollection of Hubert's taunt brought the blood rushing to his brow. He must go back, and quickly, if only to prove that he was not afraid.

All day he worked, bringing one load of brush after another to the yard behind the stable. As he came in with the final one Luisa was standing at the door. "That is a good load for the last journey."

"How can you tell?"

"By the creak of the axle and the breathing of the burro. Supper is ready. Tonight, if you wish, you may eat at my table."

He bedded down the ass for the night, washed in a bucket drawn from the well and then entered the house. Like the shed, it had only one room and was almost as sparsely furnished.

The woman bade him be seated and, from a pot on the charcoal brazier, served him a heaped dish of beans cooked with pimentos. Then she took the chair opposite him. The beans were coated with oil and tasted of garlic, but he was hungry and their meaty warmth made him feel less tired.

"You worked well today—though you are not used to it. I shall not want for brush this winter when the snow blows across from the Sierras."

"Have you lived here always?"

"No, man. I am from the town of Jerez. My husband, who died five years ago, was a cooper, making hoops for the wine casks. Had he kept to the outside of the cask all would have been well. But he went within, and for drunkenness was dismissed. Then my eyes became bad. The lids swelled and I was without sight."

"Then you knew poverty."

"Worse still . . . humiliation. In Jerez, there is a strange custom. When one is destitute, one is given the blue uniform of charity and sent into the streets to solicit alms for the common fund. One becomes officially a beggar."

"That was a hard thing to do."

"You speak truly, man. I would lie awake at night, longing for a little place in the country where we could grow food for ourselves. Then came a great sadness. Our only son was killed by a train. We sought no compensation, but the rich people who give the uniforms saw that it was paid. And with that we achieved this small place. We named it *Estancia Felipe* after our son."

"It is a good place," he said, wishing to praise her.

"It was good. Now it is gone to nothing. How can I maintain it alone?"

There was a silence. He had finished his cup of water and, rising, she refilled it. "You go to Málaga tomorrow and return in the evening?" she asked.

"If you permit it. I have no other place. I shall do work for you in payment."

She did not answer and although her sad, heavy face gave no sign he knew he had said a wrong thing. He corrected himself quickly: "I meant, not in payment, but in gratitude."

"That was well spoken."

A sudden thought came to him. He said "The burro and the cart would be of some service to you. We no longer have use for them. Will you accept them, as an expression of our thanks?"

She did not answer. Her thick, seamed lips that looked as though cut from a dark wood quivered slightly, she drew a sighing breath. Then, unexpectedly, she leaned forward and with the forefinger of one hand lightly explored the contours of his face. When she had finished she offered neither explanation nor apology. She rose, gathered up the empty dish, the metal spoon and cup.

"For your journey tomorrow you must rest. Sleep well. Then you will better withstand whatever the day may bring."

ON THE following afternoon, Stephen reached the Hospital San Miguel and nervously rang the bell. Presently a sister in the blue robe and winged wimple of St. Vincent de Paul came to the grille, and when he had given his name admitted him to a superb fifteenth-century patio and asked him to sit down.

Why did they make him wait so long? At last there came a brisk step, and from a side door Dr. Cabra appeared, wearing a short white coat. He shook hands with Stephen, and seated himself beside him on the stone bench.

"Well, here you are. Forgive me if I kept you waiting." With a sympathetic look, he placed his hand on Stephen's shoulder. It was a gesture that filled Stephen's heart with foreboding. The news is bad, he thought, as Cabra said "I want to tell you what has been done for your friend. When I brought him to the hospital I immediately opened the leg. We then used all the remedies at our command to control the septicæmia. But without effect."

Stephen felt his throat contract. There was a silence broken only by the faint intermittent murmur from the nuns in their choir. Stephen bit hard on his lip, assailed by a dreadful certainty.

"I had to make a decision. I decided to amputate. His condition was poor, yet he could not survive without it. The operation went well and was quickly over. However, shock supervened late yesterday evening. All we had done was of no avail." He paused. "The end came at eleven o'clock last night."

Stephen had known even before Cabra spoke, yet his mind seemed incapable of accepting the knowledge. So soon, so suddenly, the private impersonal death of Jerome Peyrat. Cabra murmured: "If I can help in any way, with the necessary arrangements . . ."

"He is here?"

"No. At the mortuary of mendicants. By our charter we are enabled to provide a simple funeral. You do not mind?"

"No. Peyrat will not be the last artist to die without the price of a coffin in his pocket." He stood up. "Forgive me. You have been kind. When can I go to the mortuary?"

Cabra looked at his watch. "It is closed until seven. Come first to my house. There are papers to sign."

"Thank you. Although it may take a little time, I can assure you that you will be paid."

"You owe me nothing. Some day perhaps you will paint me a picture as a souvenir of a meeting that held both pleasure and sorrow." As he escorted Stephen to the doorway, he continued, in a voice of curiosity, "In his fever your friend spoke continually the name Thérèse."

"She was someone . . . he admired."

"An affair of the heart?"

"No, only of the spirit."

"Ah, then, she died before him?"

"Yes," Stephen said, with sudden violence. "Four hundred years ago."

He went out, walking at random, head lowered. He went through the public gardens, between rows of tamarisks, clipped like umbrellas. Then, he found himself on the sea front, moving towards the break-water.

A mood of the darkest and most abject desolation was upon him. Peyrat dead. And now, as a soldier, he must abandon his work, a loss worse by far than any ordeal by battle. Was he afraid? The question was so puerile he did not even consider it. He had long since ceased to value his life in terms of physical survival. Did Hubert's scornful attitude bear

weight upon him? Perhaps. Yet, in reality, he cared nothing for Hubert, nor for his family, nor for any man's opinion of his conduct. The only thing that mattered was this creative instinct that burned within him. To paint was his passion, a need more urgent than hunger or thirst.

He was now at the end of the pier, and he sat down beside the lighthouse to rest. On the sea wall a boy was fishing, baiting his hook with fragments of shrimp, and from time to time whipping from the water tiny, silvery fish which he thrust into a canvas bag. Stephen's hand went instinctively to his pocket for the sketch-book which he had not used for many days. It was not there. The longing to work again rose within him like a ferment. He thought, I must paint, I must, or I shall go mad.

For a long time he remained motionless. Then, all at once, through the tormented effort to grapple with his situation, he was conscious of a moment of illumination. At the same time through the soft damp air came the creak of oars on wooden rowlocks, the sound of men singing. The sardine fleet was beginning to leave the harbour for the night fishing grounds. Beyond the breakwater they shipped their oars, hoisted lateen sails. Out and away they went, dipping, rising on the quiet swell, disappearing like a flight of swallows into the misty distance. The beauty of the scene appeased the anguish of his heart, strengthened the purpose that had formed within him. As greyness was falling like a shroud upon the dome of the cathedral, near which, in the mortuary, lay the body of Peyrat, he rose and went towards the town.

As he came past the gates of the harbour someone hailed him. He swung round and saw Hollis, the British vice consul, hurrying towards him. "Desmonde, I thought I recognized you. I have good news. The *SS Murcia*, a Star Line freighter, has been cleared for Liverpool, leaving on Tuesday, and the Consul General managed to save a berth for you. And I've got leave to go home and join the show. I shall be on the old tub too." Hollis was plainly delighted. "We shall probably be in the fo'c'sle, so bring a blanket and I'll take along a few tins of bully beef. Incidentally, I don't believe she'll have an escort. As enemy submarines are in the Mediterranean we might have a bit of fun."

Stephen said: "I'm sorry. I am not going back."

"What's that?"

"I am not returning to England. I am going to stay here."

Hollis's expression changed from stunned amazement, through

incredulity, into cold contempt. "And what do you propose to do?"

"I am going to paint." Stephen turned and walked off rapidly into the gathering darkness.

Chapter Ten

ON A WET October morning in the year 1920, breakfast in the red-carpeted morning-room at Broughton Court was almost over. General Desmonde, visiting for the shooting, was spreading marmalade on crisp toast.

Geoffrey broke the vaguely constrained silence. "Confound this weather. Never saw such rain. The coverts will be sopping and the birds won't fly."

Thwarted in his pride as a man of property—the Court had come to him through his marriage to Claire—Geoffrey lounged back and moodily turned the pages of the morning paper. Suddenly, an exclamation broke from him.

"By George! Listen to this." He read: "*Yesterday saw the opening at the Maddox Galleries of an exhibition of paintings by Stephen Desmonde. Mr. Desmonde, whose controversial picture, 'Circe and Her Lovers,' won the Prix de Luxembourg in 1914, is the son of the Reverend Bertram Desmonde of Stillwater Rectory, Sussex, and has recently returned to England. His younger brother, Lieutenant David Desmonde, was killed in action at Vimy Ridge. In this present collection, introduced to Britain under the sponsorship of Richard Glyn, Mr. Desmonde exhibits the fruits of his labours during the war years, which he passed in the comparative tranquillity of the Iberian peninsula. Despite this advantage, we find his landscapes crude, his figure compositions clumsy. In his complete severance from tradition Desmonde has lost sight of the basic principles of proportion, and is entangled in a perverse eccentricity. In brief, we cannot grasp this so-called art and cannot like it.*"

Geoffrey flung down the paper. Claire, sitting motionless, with a strained expression, had to curb an almost irresistible impulse to pick it up. The General had risen and, standing with his back to the fire, lit his pipe with a sort of frowning detachment.

"How will they take this at the Rectory?"

"Badly. It's sure to reopen the whole messy business."

"I suppose he'll turn up at home."

"Bound to. He can't have a bean. I knew the fellow would sneak back when the fighting was over."

Claire ventured: "I wonder if the paintings are as bad as they make out."

"Good heavens! Didn't you hear what the chap said about 'em?"

"But there's Glyn," Claire persisted. "A well-known artist. Why should he sponsor Stephen's work if it were rubbish?"

"Because he's hand in glove with my heroic cousin." Geoffrey glared at his wife. "I daresay they fixed this thing up together in some dive in Paris."

"However it was arranged," said the General, "it's a bad thing for the family. When I think of David . . ." He moved towards the door. "If you'll excuse me, Claire, I'll telephone Bertram."

"Do that, Father," Geoffrey agreed, pushing back his chair. "I'll wait for you in the billiard-room."

Alone, Claire took up the paper, found the paragraph she sought, read it through. She sighed. She had, in Geoffrey's phrase, written Stephen off long ago. Acknowledging his defects she, like the others, deplored them. Yet she detected in the review of his exhibition a prejudiced judgment of Stephen Desmonde, the man rather than the artist, which made her wish to rise in his defence—at least, she corrected herself, in defence of his work. An impulse, as yet only half formed, was stirring beneath her consciousness.

The following morning she had an appointment in London. Afterwards she walked slowly towards the West End, moving with a sort of fatalism towards the Maddox Galleries. She entered quickly, with a fast-beating heart, surprised by the modest appearance and the emptiness of the place. Only two women were present, conversing softly; a somnolent youth in striped trousers and black braided jacket, reading at a desk, seemed the sole guardian of the gallery.

Claire began to look at the paintings, seeing little in the beginning but an audacious contrast of brilliant colours, yet striving to understand them, wishing with all her heart to like them.

One, in particular, an Andalusian landscape, held her for a long time.

She could feel the hard brilliance of the light, the sun beating on arid slopes and stunted olive trees. Then she came upon the figure of a ragged old woman with a wooden hoe upon her shoulder. There was in this composition such a fusion of sadness and dignity that it touched Claire to the heart.

As she stood absorbed, a voice addressed her. She swung round, and saw Stephen. The blood rushed from her cheeks.

"Claire! How good of you to come."

He took her hand warmly. He had, she saw through her confusion, become extremely thin, and he had grown a beard, cropped close, which gave his face an almost startling gauntness. Yet he was brown and held himself erect. He had a vital quality which reassured her.

"How little changed you are," he went on. "Let's sit over here, where we can talk. How are the children, and Geoffrey?"

She gave him news of her family, not daring to mention his own people at the Rectory. His manner, direct and friendly, lacking that youthful shyness which had once tormented him, should have set her at ease. Yet she could not fully regain her composure.

"I suppose you've been round the show," he remarked lightly. "Do tell me what you think of it."

"I like it," she answered awkwardly, like a schoolgirl.

"Don't be afraid to speak your mind. I'm quite hardened."

She flushed. "The critique in the *Post* was so unfair."

"Oh, that was mild. You should see my other notices. *Aboriginal daubs . . . perverted nonsense*." He smiled faintly.

She was affected deeply. Her gaze, downcast, took in his heavy workman's boots, a rough darn on the knee of his corduroys. She exclaimed, involuntarily: "Stephen! It hasn't been easy for you."

"I've been doing the only thing that matters to me."

"But it must be dreadfully discouraging, to meet always with abuse, to be denied success."

"It's the work that matters. Besides, I've had some slight recognition. Two of my paintings are in the Municipal Gallery in The Hague, one in Brussels and another in the Oslo State Museum."

The revelation filled her with pleasure. Her eyes turned to the painting of the old Spanish woman. "I like that, very much."

"Luisa Mendez. After a friend of mine died and I was down to my

last peseta she took me in. She had little enough, and she was blind." He added: "I couldn't afford canvas. It's painted on burlap, a piece cut from a potato sack."

"Have you just come from Spain?"

"No. Eighteen months ago. I went to Paris to work with Amédée Modigliani. A fine painter. I was fond of him."

"You say 'was'?"

"He died in January at the Hôpital de la Charité."

What depths of hardship had Stephen not sounded in these years? She could see the marks of it in his face, as though he had escaped despair only by the secret passion that was in him.

She stirred nervously and made a pretence of inspecting her watch. "I must rush for my train. You will be coming to the Rectory, won't you, Stephen?"

"It was a mistake for me to go back before. It would be a worse one now. Besides, they can't possibly want me."

"Oh, I'm sure they do. They have missed you."

"Well," he hesitated, "if I'm asked . . ."

"I'm so glad. We shall see you there then, Stephen. Good-bye."

She walked briskly across the Mall towards the station. The protective instinct she had always had towards Stephen, and which, of course, she still might legitimately feel, was re-aroused, and in its glow she was happy. In the train, a smile of recollection parted her lips. And suddenly she had an inspiration, which caused her to sit up with a stifled exclamation. How splendid, if it could be done! There would be difficulties, yet surely, oh, surely she could overcome them. At least she would try with all her heart.

OFTEN in his years of absence Stephen's thoughts had turned back towards London. Now he scarcely recognized it. The postwar price of food appalled him, the more so as he had arrived in England with less than three pounds in his pocket. The process of demobilization, still proceeding, produced an air of dislocation. In the West End a restless gaiety prevailed. Nearly a million young Britons had died in the war, another million had been incapacitated. Was it to forget this fact that people flocked to the theatres, restaurants and night clubs?

Only the river remained unchanged, and Stephen spent many hours

wandering along the embankments, studying the fluid play of reflections. And one morning, the day before his exhibition closed, he took a bus to Stepney.

The weather was fair when he started off, but as the omnibus drew into Seven Sisters Lane a misty rain blotted out the waterfront. At the Red Lion he got off the bus. The day was killed for painting, but he was on familiar ground. On an impulse, he swung into Clinker Street, mounted the steps of the Settlement and rang the bell. The porter who opened the door gazed at Stephen without recognition.

"Is Mr. Loftus still here?"

"You mean the Reverend Gerald Loftus? Only last year they made him vicar of St. Barnabas."

"Indeed! I'm glad he's done so well. You don't by chance know of a young woman who used to work here . . . Jenny Baines?"

"Mrs. Baines!" the man answered at once. "Course I do. Lives quite near. Seventeen Cable Street. Had some bad luck in her time. But a nice little woman, and doing all right now."

"Bad luck?"

"She had a kid what died. Then lost her husband. He caught a fever in Australia and was buried at sea."

"Thank you for your information." Stephen turned and went down the steps.

In ten minutes he was walking along the slightly curved row of brick houses in Cable Street, noting the numbers on the fanlights. He was almost opposite Number 17 when the door opened and a woman came out, bareheaded, wearing a mackintosh and carrying a string bag. He would have known her anywhere.

"Jenny," he said. "Don't you remember me?"

She looked at him. Then in a faraway voice she said:

"Mr. Stephen Desmonde."

"Yes, Jenny. You look as though you'd seen a ghost."

"Oh, no, sir. You have changed though—you're thinner." Colour flooded back into her face. Still flustered, she added, "I was just going shopping down the street. Come back in the house."

"No, no," he protested. "I'll come along with you."

He took her umbrella and held it over them as they walked along Cable Street. "How long is it since we last met?"

"It must be eight years, yes, eight years and three months."

The exactitude of her reply amused him.

"I sent you a postcard once from Paris. Did you ever get it?"

"It's on my kitchen mantelpiece, this minute. The Eiffel Tower. Been much admired."

They were now in the main street and he took her by the elbow and steered her into a tea-room. "We'll have a cup of tea."

"You remember my weakness, sir. I always was a one for tea."

A waitress detached herself from the little group gossiping in the back premises.

"Tea and hot buttered toast for two."

"And see it is butter, miss, if you please," Jenny said, adding to Stephen: "They'd give you marge as soon as look at you."

The tea was brought, the toast examined and approved.

"And how have things been with you, Jenny? I was sorry to hear that you are alone now."

"Yes, I've had my troubles. But I never was one to sit and mope. I put Alf's insurance in a nice little house."

"You take lodgers?"

"In a very particular way, sir. I have one regular, old Captain Tapley. Not to mislead you, it was only a barge he had when he retired. But he's nice, sir. Then I have another room I let temporary to ships' officers unloading at the docks. When they're pushed at mission time, I even take a clergyman from the Settlement."

"Good Lord, Jenny. Clergymen. After all they did to you. You're as forgiving and as cheerful as ever."

"Why shouldn't I be, sir? I have my independence. And I'm lucky to have Florrie, Alf's sister. One of the best. She has a tidy little business in Margate. I go down a lot to help her."

"What sort of business?"

"Wet fish."

Her adjective made him smile. "Is there any other kind?"

She laughed. "Wet's what they say in the trade. Not salt and that like. Florrie's mostly in the shrimp line."

Studying her as she sat there, he understood why he had always wanted to paint her. Something in her: a quality of womanhood, the generosity of her wide mouth, that vivid complexion.

"And how about you, sir? You're still at the painting?"

"It's still at me. Got me by the throat. Won't let go."

"Yes," she agreed with practical complaisance. "If you have to do a thing I suppose you have to. Like falling overboard and having to swim for it."

Her dry smile was irresistible. He laughed, and so did she, in a joint fit of laughter. Wiping her eyes, she said, "It is strange to see you in these parts again, Mr. Desmonde. I suppose . . . I suppose you came down to see them at the Settlement."

He shook his head. "I wanted to paint the old Barking wharf."

"Oh!" Her eyes fell. "Those tumble-down old shacks?" She broke off, then asked: "Will you be stopping in London long?"

"I'm afraid not. I'm leaving in a couple of days."

A silence followed. He took up the bill.

She drew a quick breath, then asked, with touching diffidence: "Won't you come back and meet Cap'n Tapley?"

"Perhaps another time, Jenny. I may be down here again."

"Don't forget to look me up if you come, sir."

At the swing-doors they shook hands, then set off in opposite directions. As he reached the street corner something made him turn his head. And she too was looking back. He waved and went on. The mist, thickening to fog, seemed to accentuate his sense of having lost both warmth and companionship.

STEPHEN's exhibition closed on the last day of November. Charles Maddox, owner of the gallery, had undertaken it reluctantly and only after pressure from Richard Glyn but, to his surprise, two pictures were sold to an agent during the final week of the show. He more than covered his expenses, while Stephen, after deduction of commission, received a cheque for three hundred pounds. This unaccustomed affluence cast a better light upon his prospective visit to Stillwater. A letter, brief but not unkind, had come from his father, inviting him to the Rectory, and he had written to accept. Now, at least, he would not return a beggar.

Early on December 3 he packed his rucksack and entrained for Sussex. He got off at the station-before his, so that he might walk cross-country to Stillwater. It was an exquisite winter morning. The pale yellow sun

had not yet dispelled the frost which silvered every blade of grass, every hawthorn twig. The air was still, but sharp as cider. In the fields cows moved in the vapour of their own breath. How often in Spain, wandering through the hot olive groves, he had been haunted by the thought of England's drenched meadows and osier-hung brooks.

As he tramped the winding lanes, every step brought back the days when he had scoured these woods and meadows with his brother. That sense of self-reproach which, since he learned of Davie's death, had never quite left him flared up again in his breast. Suddenly, painfully, he seemed stripped of the faith in his own creative powers which usually sustained him, felt himself worthless, his life a weak and wasted essay in futility.

He reached Stillwater village and traversed the cobbled streets. The place had grown in his absence, a modern note struck by a red fronted Woolworth's, a cinema with a showy marquee, a large dance hall and a row of red brick bungalows, built on the main road above the lane which gave access to the Rectory. Saddened, he hastened down the lane, into the Rectory grounds. Here, too, he sensed change, a slight neglect.

The side door of the Rectory stood open. The next minute he was in the house. In the kitchen he found Caroline, wearing a stained apron, seated at the table, coring apples.

"Carrie," he exclaimed.

She turned, dropped the coring knife, put out her hands.

"Oh, Stephen, I'm glad you've come. Father has gone to a conference at Charminster. We didn't expect you till evening."

"And Mother?"

"Away. As usual. Let me get you something to eat?"

He shook his head.

"I warn you, lunch won't be much."

At this, moisture formed beneath her lids. He sat down beside her, offered her a red cotton handkerchief. "Tell me."

She unburdened herself. Her troubles could be expressed in a single word—change. She could not hire a decent servant these days. Women, accustomed to munition-factory wages, had lost taste for domestic service. Untrained village girls, pert and careless, came and went in the kitchen. Stephen might have smiled but for Caroline's drawn expression and roughened hands. He kept silent while she resumed: "Money

seems to be scarce with Father. We don't work the farm any more. During the war we were all ploughed up, it was too much to get the meadows back to grass, especially since we'd lost Mould."

"What! Is the old chap dead?"

"No. Retired . . . by his remarkable son." She continued with a note of bitterness: "I suppose you noticed the new bungalows on the Warren. Albert Mould built them. Made heaps of money. Now he's in politics too. He hates us, and last year he had a violent row with Father over the glebe boundary."

"How is Father?"

"He can't do so much as he used to, but he's perfectly sound. And of course, like the rest of us, he has his worries." In a subdued tone, Caroline added: "Mother."

Julia's eccentricity, Caroline said, had become a source of real concern. She was often away for weeks at a time. Her hypochondria had progressed, so that from orthodox physicians she had passed to quacks and faith healers. Now she was installed at Shepherd's Bush in the curative establishment of an Eastern mystic who expounded some form of theosophy. She had, of course, her own small income, yet surely this must be inadequate for such a mode of life. She lived in her own dream world, from which the war, Stephen's absence, even Davie's death had not moved her.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the Rector arrived. He greeted Stephen quietly, then led the way into the library where, before a wood fire, Caroline had ready tea and toasted muffins.

"How good to have a fire these wintry days." He held his hands to the blaze which brought out the strain and sadness in his face. This meeting was terrible for him. He longed to take Stephen to his heart; yet, warned by past experience, he dared not. Even his son's appearance, the beard and clothes, and that set expression, like a mask over the face, aroused his apprehensions.

Stephen plunged his hand in the deep pocket of his jacket and produced two wrapped packages which, impelled by something inexplicable within him, he had brought from London. He gave one to his father and the other to Caroline.

"It's nothing much, Father. But I hope you'll like it. Yours too, Carrie."

Carrie was already opening hers and, with an exclamation of pleasure, drew out a brooch of aquamarines and antique gold.

"Oh, Stephen, how lovely "

The Rector unwrapped his gift. It was an illuminated Book of Hours, a prize he had coveted all his life. Speechless, Bertram gazed at his son.

"Don't look at me like that, Father. I assure you it's come by honestly."

"You purchased it?"

"Naturally. I'd been lucky enough to sell two pictures at the exhibition."

"My dear boy—someone has actually bought your paintings?" The Rector's eyes filled. This success, even in the field of art, gratified him beyond words. Then, gazing at the gift, he said, in a shaking voice: "I am deeply touched by your thoughtfulness."

Many times that evening, after the brief supper, he took up the little book, turned its vellum pages with a fondling, meditative touch. Could it be that things might come all right in the end? No doubt Stephen had strayed far from the decent ways of his upbringing, behaved deplorably during the war. But he had always been open-hearted and generous, and he was older now. Surely at last he must think of settling down.

Hopefully, the Rector studied the prodigal, now just concluding a game of chess with Caroline. How good that he should be playing with his sister and not, as had been feared, seeking distractions in the taverns of Charminster or Brighton.

At bedtime, Stephen stood in his own room, so lit by moonlight he needed no other illumination. He glanced round—at the shelves, still holding his first books, the battered botanical cabinet, his early water colours, and the map he had made of Stillwater parish. He picked up a snapshot of David, playing stump cricket on the lawn. He looked at it steadily, enduring the solemn eyes, the nervous boyish stance. Then, turning with a set face, he threw open his window, braced to the shock of the frosted air.

The Downs lay bathed in moonlight. Through the leafless beeches the fluted spire of the church rose from the dark yews. This downland was his home, his inheritance, yet he had thrown it wilfully away. For what? He thought of the past eight years, the poverty, the disappointments, the work and more work, the wild elations, the ghastly stretches

of sterility . . . he closed his eyes, as against pain. No matter how he felt he was in the power of forces that moved to inscrutable and irrevocable ends.

DURING the days which followed Stephen spent most of his time working in the Rectory garden. On the few occasions when he went to the village he became conscious of some queer looks directed at him. Several times abusive remarks were shouted after him by the gang of youths who habitually stood at the corner outside the cinema. And one afternoon a lump of mud flew past his head, accompanied by the taunt, "War hero!"

This was a strange, fallow period for him, but occasionally, after lunch, he walked upon the Downs as far as Chillingham Lake, where he sat upon a stump and filled his sketch-book with studies of ruffled water and stark, wintry trees. Late one afternoon, returning from such an excursion, he came out upon the country road which lay midway between the Rectory and Broughton Court. He became aware through the gathering twilight of a woman, bareheaded, coming towards him. It was Claire.

"I thought I might meet you here!" She smiled. "Caroline told me you were at Chillingham. I walked over on the chance."

They fell into step along the road. A soft mist was rising, faintly mingled with the tang of distant wood smoke.

"Are you happy to be home?"

He nodded. "One can't come back after years abroad without falling in love with England all over again."

"And could you paint here?"

"I could anywhere. The best of the Impressionists painted in the suburbs, in their own back yards."

"This is your back yard, Stephen. Seriously, the Rectory would be such a haven for you."

"I'm too odd a bird ever to roost here again." His voice was hard. "I've broken from the beliefs and prejudices of my class."

"If you stay on, something may turn up to convince you. . . ." She broke off, leaving unexplained the inspiration that had come to her in the train, on the day she had been to his exhibition.

In nearby Charminster, a committee under the auspices of the



cathedral clergy had recently constructed a handsome Gothic hall to serve as a library and war memorial, a monument dedicated to peace. Suggestions for the decoration of the interior were now being discussed. The vote had fallen upon a series of panels, done in oils on canvas, and framed in Sussex oak. The names of various painters had been suggested but so far nothing had been decided.

And so, on the very day after seeing Stephen at the exhibition, Claire had motored to Charminster to see the Dean of the cathedral, who had been a close friend of her mother.

The Dean was an aged figure, upon whom growing deafness had

pressed an increasing withdrawal from all but his most essential duties. He received Claire with affection, listened with cupped ear to the case which she diplomatically presented. Perhaps Stephen's name evoked a dubious echo, but it was quickly lost in the Dean's benign senescence and the desire to resume his nap. Besides, who had more claim to suggest a candidate than the daughter of Lady Broughton? And the Reverend Bertram was a worthy worker in the vineyard. The Dean, patting her hand, promised to discuss the matter with the chairman of the committee.

Surely she had done enough. Yet on her way home Claire called on Rear Admiral Tryng, the chairman, and on her bank manager, Mark Sutton, another important committee member, both of whom, perhaps flattered by her confidence and reassured by mention of her visit to the Dean, agreed to support her nominee.

How simple it had all been. She felt a glow of accomplishment. Ten days had passed; then, this afternoon, Admiral Tryng had telephoned her. Desmonde was to be interviewed by the committee and subject to its approval would receive the appointment.

She must tell Stephen at once. And here she was, walking by his side, yet unable to speak one word of her momentous news. It was twilight when they reached the gates of Broughton Court, and here Stephen paused. "I shan't come any farther, Claire."

"Won't you?" She hesitated. "Geoffrey's been in town today . . . but he should be back quite soon."

Stephen shook his head.

"Good night then, Stephen," she murmured. "Remember that I have faith in you. The tide may turn, sooner than you think."

An hour later, Stephen arrived at the Rectory.

"At last!" Caroline greeted him excitedly. "I thought you'd never come. Father wants to see you right away."

As Stephen entered the library, the Rector took him by the hand. "My dear boy, today in Charminster, I was given great and wholly unexpected news. You are being considered, and may well be chosen, to paint the panels of the new Memorial."

ON THE following day, at three o'clock, the four members of the Memorial committee—Rear Admiral Tryng, Mark Sutton, Joseph

Cordley, a churchwarden and merchant, and Arnold Sharp, the Charminster solicitor, assembled in a small office of the chancellery, and Stephen was summoned before them. The Dean was not present.

Tryng, the chairman, cast a searching glance upon Stephen as he entered, and was relieved. He did not care much for the close-cropped hair and beard nor that independent air, but the fellow looked a gentleman.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Desmonde. Won't you take a chair? We needn't beat about the bush. We want five panels, approximately six feet by four, which will suitably express the heroic yet tragic purpose for which this building stands."

"I should certainly do my best."

Stephen took a guarded look at the four men seated behind the long table and recognized immediately that two were favourable to him and two opposed. Of these latter, one was Arnold Sharp, a thin, bleak-looking man, and the other was red-faced Joe Cordley.

"I suppose you have brought samples of your work to show the committee?" Sharp said.

"I'm afraid not. Most of my recent paintings are in the hands of my London agent. I'll gladly have several sent down."

"I think," Tryng cut in, "I can vouch for Mr. Desmonde's competence. And so will the Dean."

"But is he competent for this particular task," the solicitor demurred, "dealing as it does with the recent war?"

Sharp's neighbour, Joe Cordley, cocked his blunt face towards Stephen.

"You wasn't in the war, Mr. Desmonde?"

"No. I was abroad."

"Ah!" Cordley let his bulk sink back in his chair. "Abroad . . . but not in the trenches."

"I believe," Sharp was speaking again, "your young brother was killed in action, wasn't he?"

"Yes." Stephen compressed his lips. He had come eager to obtain the commission; now in face of this hostile interrogation his determination hardened. "While I took no part in the war, I have, perhaps because of this, ideas which might qualify me for this particular work. It seems to me that these panels should not only stand as a tribute to those who gave

their lives but, through stressing the tragedy of war, the element of sacrifice and suffering, should help, perhaps, to prevent another world calamity."

"Bravo, Mr. Desmonde," Tryng said heartily. He liked the speech and the way Stephen looked straight at Sharp. Pity the fellow was such a deuced funk!—but there, once in a while, even the best families would turn out a white rabbit.

"And now about dates."

"Would you be prepared," Sharp interrupted, "to submit designs for our approval?"

"That is quite contrary to the usual procedure. I will submit designs if you insist but, since this represents the most difficult half of the work, only if you commission me beforehand."

"We've no time to waste on that." Tryng spoke definitely. "Not with the official opening in three months. Could you complete the work by then?"

"I think so. When I'm interested I work very quickly."

"Good. The fee we propose is five hundred guineas."

"Payment on delivery," Sharp said sourly.

"I accept your conditions," Stephen said. "I should however like to work in the hall itself. I have no studio here."

"I think that can be allowed. We'll get you the key." Tryng paused. "That's all then, gentlemen. I congratulate you, Mr. Desmonde. And I know you will give us a magnificent job of work."

STEPHEN walked directly to the new building, which stood not far from the cathedral close.

He was immediately impressed by the simplicity and purity of its design; and the interior, in shape a pentagon, with plain, unbroken, whitewashed walls, was superb for his plans. How his colours would burn and glow against that dead-white background and how perfect was the spacing of these five identical walls.

For a long time he remained in the empty hall, squatting on one knee, oblivious to everything but the forms that were already swirling into the screen of his sight.

For several days he refrained from starting work. He wanted to reflect deeply on this subject, so painfully near his heart. The loss of his brother,

all the arid hardships of his years in Spain shaped his thoughts. Within him stirred the revolt of a wounded spirit against the eternal tragedy of human violence.

When he began to paint he was more and more carried away by his burning desire to express not only the heroism but also the dreadful waste of war, so that, if the world might only look upon his pictures, it might never yield to such madness again. He often did not leave the hall from early morning until the light failed him in the evening. At night he returned to the Rectory, exhausted, but with a sense of accomplishment.

For the Rector, who had pictured artists as indolent bohemians, this Spartan application was not only a staggering surprise but a source of satisfaction. His son was at home, leading a regular life, working at a project connected with the cathedral. To what might not this lead in the end?

There had been a markedly unfavourable reaction—he was forced to admit—when the news of Stephen's appointment was made public. Several damaging letters had appeared in the local press. Worried, the Rector had consulted with Caroline.

"The attacks are cruel." Bertram's brows were drawn in a harassed frown. "Most vicious. And unfortunately true."

"But quite unfair, Father. Why all this about Stephen's not being in the army? He should be judged as an artist."

"At the same time, for a war memorial . . . there's justice in the idea that they might have chosen an ex serviceman."

"Who might have been a very poor painter. His friend, Richard Glyn, who has shown at the Royal Academy, came down the other day. Stephen showed what he had already done, and Glyn was quite carried away."

The Rector looked pleased. "If he makes a success of this, it might reopen for him a true spiritual field, church decoration, stained-glass windows and the like. Who knows but that one day under such influence he might even yet take orders?" He broke off, rose and reached for his hat.

From the window she watched him go up the lane, a long black figure, under the flat shovel hat. She knew he was going to the church to pray.

 *Chapter Eleven*

AMONG the many excellent and decided qualities which characterized General Desmonde's wife, sweetness of temper was less obvious than the rest. She had been brought up in a military atmosphere, toasted in her maidenhood as the daughter of the regiment, and married to a general. All this had intensified her capacity to rule. This January morning there was a tightness of the lips, a dilation of the nostrils which boded little good for anyone who might cross her. Seated at her walnut bureau, her admirable figure taut in tweed and jumper, she gazed at the blotter before her.

What should she do? How . . . how should she act?

Some weeks before, she had called at Broughton Court to see Claire. Finding that her daughter-in-law had gone for a walk, she sat down in the drawing-room to wait, and, from the windows, caught a glimpse of Stephen and Claire returning together from the lonely country lane outside the Court walls. How close they had stood together! With Geoffrey absent, and with Stephen's notorious reputation, it was most alarming.

In fairness, the General's lady acknowledged that Claire was of irreproachable character. Yet the recollection of her youthful predilection for Stephen was not easily dismissed. And even more alarming were the events of the previous evening—she and the General had been out to dinner and on her left at the table had been Reginald Tryng. She had at first failed to understand his genial reference to Claire. Then, stung to attention, she listened while he related his diplomacy in managing to get the Memorial commission for Stephen as Claire had asked him to. It was, he concluded, extremely handsome of Claire to put herself out for Geoffrey's cousin Stephen!

The Rear Admiral brought to a head all of Adelaide's suspicions. Claire, interesting herself surreptitiously in this cad. It must be stopped before it became a scandal in the country. Today, she knew, Claire was in London. With sudden decision she went to the telephone and asked Geoffrey to come for tea.

He came about four o'clock, having nothing else to do. Adelaide fed

him well; then, while he stretched his legs before a glowing fire, she led the conversation to the next meet of the hounds. Time passed agreeably for Geoffrey in the sound of his own voice. When the clock struck six he heaved himself out of his chair.

"Jolly decent tea, Mater. Quite enjoyed our little pow-wow."

"I, too, Geoffrey." She accompanied him to the hall. "By the way, I hear that your cousin is at the Rectory."

"Yes, worse luck. I shan't have anything to do with him."

"That's wise, Geoffrey. And I should warn Claire to keep out of his way if I were you."

"What d'you mean?"

"You know you cut him out with Claire. It must rankle frightfully. And after these years in the lowest haunts in Paris, he's not to be trusted. Do set my mind at rest and say a word to her."

"Oh, very well. Good night, Mater."

She stood at the open door as, with a crunch of wheels on gravel, he shot off down the drive. Then, well satisfied with her afternoon's work, she turned back into the house.

Geoffrey, though not very intelligent, had a sharp awareness of what he called "a put-up job." He kept asking himself, "What was the old girl after?" So his reaction to his mother's advice was a decision not to speak to Claire but to remain mum and investigate the situation.

When he got home Claire had not yet returned from London. Upstairs he paused outside her small sitting-room and went in. He went directly to her desk and began systematically to search it. There was nothing that was not innocent; there were even early snapshots of himself as a cadet at Sandhurst.

Half ashamed, he was about to go when, in the top drawer, he uncovered a single folded sheet. It was a bill for four hundred pounds, receipted, from the Maddox Galleries, for two paintings: *Charity* and *Noon in the Olive Grove* by Stephen Desmonde.

ON AN afternoon in early March the monthly meeting of the West Sussex District Council was droning to an end. Among the fourteen members present Albert Mould sat unusually silent gnawing at a thumbnail, his seal-like head sunk in his upturned coat collar. As the committee began to disperse, Mould, with his friend Joe Cordley at his

elbow, stationed himself by the door and, as Rear Admiral Tryng approached, buttonholed him.

"I'd like a word with you, sir. A most unpleasant duty. It's about them panels for the Memorial Hall."

"Well, what about them?" snapped Tryng, looking at his watch.

"Just this, sir. It's pretty near three months now since them paintings were started and nobody 'as been allowed to see them, the panels being kept under lock and key. Well, sir, that didn't seem right and proper—at least not to two members of your sub-committee. So, they asked me to accompany them to inspect the pictures. Mr. Arnold Sharp 'ad me get a duplicate key."

Tryng stared his displeasure.

"Well, sir, we got into the 'all yesterday evening. And it's my painful duty to tell you we did not like wot we saw."

"Come now, Mould. You're no judge of art."

"But it ain't only my judgment, poor though that may be. Lawyer Sharp and Joe Cordley 'as the same opinion."

"That we 'as," said Cordley with decision. "I'll take my Bible oath. If it was me was chairman, I'd 'ave a look at them."

Tryng felt a twinge of concern. "You have your kev, Mould?"

"We 'ave, sir. And Joe and me are both free now."

"Let us go then."

They took to the road in the Admiral's car. At Charminster, on Mould's suggestion, they picked up Sharp and Sutton. Darkness had fallen when Mould admitted the five men into the Memorial. The hall was empty—Stephen had left an hour before. Cordley switched on the lights. And there, before them, were the panels.

The first to attract Tryng's eye was that named by Stephen *Offering to Peace*: a young woman holding out an infant against a background of golden wheat fields and fruitful countryside, richly peopled with cheerful rustic figures. He was conscious of a warm flow of relief. Why, the thing was good, he really liked it. But when he turned to the second panel, *Hail, Armageddon*, with its deadly massing of guns, and uniformed men, while crowds cheered, bands played and flags were waved under a darkening sky, his misgivings were sharply reawakened. With sickening apprehension, he scanned the third canvas, *The Rape of Peace*, and the fourth, *Aftermath*, which portrayed on the one hand the

dreadful incidents of war, on the other its frightful consequences—famine, pestilence, violence and ruin, the whole surveyed by the nude, weeping figure of a woman. The final panel, *Resurrection of the Slain*, made his eyes start from his head. Strange, human forms, disfigured, unclothed, were bursting out of their graves beneath a wildly trumpeting angelic host.

And it was he, Rear Admiral Reginald Tryng, who had sponsored Desmonde. He squared his shoulders.

"Well, gentlemen, this is most regrettable. I must see the Dean at once. I shall call a meeting for tomorrow. Nine o'clock sharp. I'll have Desmonde there. In the meantime kindly refrain from public comment. Good night."

ON THE following morning, Stephen came before the committee. He was in excellent spirits. His work was almost finished and he knew that it was good. Soon he would show the panels to the committee, who doubtless wished to ask him about that very matter.

"Mr. Desmonde," Tryng said abruptly, "I must inform you that we have seen your paintings. We are profoundly shocked by them."

The unexpectedness of the attack caught Stephen off guard. He started, then stood there, very pale, his eyes grown sombre and hard. Before he could speak Tryng continued: "Instead of something noble and heroic, you have given us a portrayal of human suffering that is morbid and degrading."

"You seemed to approve my ideas before I began."

"No one in his senses could approve those panels."

"Are you competent to judge?"

"You thought us competent enough when we engaged you. The committee cannot accept your paintings. To make them presentable would require complete repainting. Will you do this?"

"No, I won't," Stephen answered. "It's absurd of you to ask it."

"In that case I must ask you to desist from further work upon the panels. Your engagement is cancelled."

"I'd like to put on record," Sharp said, "that under the terms of the agreement no payment is due."

Stephen remained completely still, struggling with his inner tumult. Then without a word, he swung round and left the room.

His steps led him instinctively to the Memorial. He was determined, despite the injunction laid upon him, to finish the panels. By a fortunate omission they had not made him give up his key.

But when he arrived at the building, he found the door secured by a bar and padlock. He turned away. Through the town he went, all unseeing, out upon the Downs, where, striding forward, a dark and lonely figure against the skyline, he seemed to defy the universe that stood arrayed against him.

That afternoon, the committee announced that the panels had not attained the requisite standard and were therefore unacceptable. To Adelaide, this brought a pleasurable sense of vindication. Geoffrey, nursing his grievance, experienced a moody satisfaction intensified by a rumour that Stephen had disappeared. No doubt the blighter was lying dead drunk in a pub!

Three days later, on the Thursday evening of that same unhappy week, Caroline entered the library at Stillwater. The Rector sat in his usual chair, staring into the fire. For a moment she stood, hesitant. "I wondered, Father . . . if I should lock up."

"There is still no sign of him?"

"No, Father. And it is almost eleven."

"Leave everything as it is. And be off to bed. You must be very weary. Good night, Carrie."

Reluctantly, Caroline went upstairs to her chilly bedroom while Bertram, erect in his chair, waited for his son. Slowly the minutes dragged on; at midnight the last ember of the fire flickered and died. Useless to wait longer. The Rector slowly mounted the stairs.

The following afternoon, when Caroline was resting in her room while Bertram was out on a parochial call, the sound of footsteps, brisk, familiar, drew her to the window. It was Stephen. Quickly she threw on her old pink dressing-gown, met him as he came into the house.

"Get me something to eat, Carrie, there's a dear. As soon as you can. I'm starving."

"Where have you been?" Her voice held an accusing note. "We've been worried about you. Where did you sleep?"

He smiled. "My natural habitat. Ground level. And in my clothes. I'm going up for a wash and a change."

She sighed, relieved to see him, yet full of misgiving. But she made

him bacon and eggs and brewed a pot of strong tea. As he ate and drank he parried all her questions, then, relenting, sat back in his chair and explained. "It's really quite simple, Carrie. I had to finish my paintings. And as they'd locked me out, I broke in."

"And you've been in the Memorial all this time? With nothing to eat and sleeping on the floor?"

"I assure you, dear Carrie, that didn't bother me in the least." His voice hardened. "I wanted to get my work done. And now it is, varnished and complete." He glanced at the clock. "I must be off."

"Oh, no, Stephen! Father will want to see you."

"I shall be back, quite early," he assured her. "Certainly before ten I promise you."

There was something behind his words which she could not comprehend. The next morning he had left the house as abruptly as he had appeared. At the end of the line, the local bus loomed up. Stephen hailed it and took his seat as it moved off in the direction of Charminster.

All the stubbornness in his character had risen against the treatment meted out to him. He was convinced that the panels were of the highest quality. That they should have been dismissed without recourse to expert opinion made his blood surge. Worst of all was the manner in which the committee had impounded his work, for which they had paid nothing. He would not submit. Carefully, he went over the arrangements he had made.

He got off the bus in Charminster, and walked rapidly to the railway station. He reached the main platform just as the six o'clock train from London drew in. Young Thorpe Maddox, his London agent's nephew, descended.

"Good of you to come," Stephen said, as they shook hands.

"Only too glad to help, Mr. Desmonde. Uncle sent his regards."

"I'm putting you up at the Blue Boar," Stephen said as they walked towards the station exit. "But first we have work to do."

In the centre of Charminster, just off Market Street, there was a shop, originally a stationer's known as Langlands which, through a succession of failures, had become a local "let-out" on short term leases for Boy Scout rallies and charity sales. Opposite this establishment Stephen stopped.

"This is the place I've rented. Not much. But good wall space, and a

desk and chair for you. Come round the back way. There's a hand-cart in the yard."

Five minutes later, pushing the hand-cart between them through the almost deserted streets, they trundled off to the Memorial. In less than twenty minutes they had transferred Stephen's panels from the building to the barrow, where he covered them with a strip of sacking. Back at the Langlands establishment, he and Maddox unloaded the cargo, carried it into the shop. After drawing the blinds they set the *Rape of Peace* panel in the front window, the *Armageddon* directly opposite the entrance. The remaining three panels were hung in the main room of the shop.

Stephen turned to his companion. "Well, what's the verdict?"

"You know I've always been keen about your work, Mr. Desmonde. I'll swear these surpass anything you've done. They are tremendous."

"Then you won't mind sitting with them for a couple of weeks?"

"I'd say not." Young Maddox paused. "Uncle hasn't seen them?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"I'm just wondering, Mr. Desmonde, whether he would think you wise in exhibiting them in Charminster."

"It's in Charminster I must show them. And why not?"

"Well, sir . . . this is a small, backward sort of place. I'll bet they don't know a work of art from a turnip. If these panels were in the National Gallery or the Louvre, people would take them at their worth. But what on earth will they think of them down here?"

NEXT MORNING at nine o'clock, Thorpe Maddox opened the shop, placing the panels on public display. Almost at the same moment the bank manager, Mark Sutton, came along Market Street on his way to work. He saw the great painting in the window, recognized it, and almost had a fit. Four minutes later he was in his office telephoning to Tryng. The Admiral declared helplessly that he washed his hands of the whole affair.

"Of course they are his own paintings. He is entitled to take them. Otherwise I'd have burned the lot long ago. The cursed paintings will cause a bigger commotion in Charminster than anything since the fire in Bailey's brewery."

In the ordinary way an exhibition of paintings would have had slight impact on the life of this country town. But the sequence of events,

linked to the reputation of the artist, enwrapped the panels in a horrid fascination. All Charminster went to view them, as a crowd might gather at a morgue.

The reaction of the citizens was one of stupefaction. They were scandalized. The paintings seemed to violate all decencies of patriotism, religion and morality. Civic conscience was aroused, and the local press went into action. In the *Chronicle* an editorial appeared, its caption: *Salacious Art.*

Admiral Tryng, feeling his confidence had been betrayed by Stephen, was conscious, as the storm grew, of a sense of compunction towards Claire, who was also a victim in the affair. One day, alarmed by a word let drop by Sharp, the town solicitor, he took up the telephone, and got through to Broughton Court.

"Hello, hello, Admiral Tryng. Might I speak to Mrs. Desmonde?"

"I'm afraid my wife is engaged at present."

"Oh, it's you, Geoffrey. Nice to hear your voice, my dear fellow. In the light of something I heard today, it's imperative your cousin close the exhibition and clear out with his confounded daubs, without delay. I don't wish to say more over the telephone but you get my meaning. . . ."

"I think I do."

"Good. I quite realize that when your wife asked me to get your cousin the job she had no idea what we were in for, poor girl."

A silence.

"Well . . . Good-bye, Geoffrey, and good luck."

Geoffrey came away from the telephone white with rage. His suspicions had never envisaged anything so damaging to his self-esteem. With an expression carefully blank, he went up to his wife's sitting-room. Claire was sitting idly by the window, an open book on her knee.

"What's this you've got?" He took up the book: *The Post-Impressionists*. "Ha! You've shown quite an interest in art lately! By the way, when are we to see your new pictures?"

"What pictures?"

"The two you purchased in London. Don't you remember?"

Knowing that he was baiting her, she forced herself to look at him. "They are being kept for me at present."

His tone hardened. "Why did you subsidize that fellow?"

"I liked the paintings."

"I don't believe it. The blighter can't paint. Yet you flung away four hundred on him, when we need every penny we've got for the upkeep of the place. And not content with that," the angry words came with a rush, "you cadged about to get him this Memorial job, which of course he botched, making you the talk of the county. Why the devil did you do it?"

"I wished to help him," she answered in a low voice.

"Have you been seeing him?"

"Only once . . . for a few minutes in the road."

"I don't believe you. You're carrying on with him."

"No, Geoffrey."

He glared at her. "I suppose you encouraged him to set up this damned exhibition."

"I did not encourage him. But I can understand why he did it. If an artist believes in his work he must stand up for it. When Manet, Gauguin and Van Gogh and the other modern French painters exhibited their early works, there was a dreadful outcry. And now these pictures are acknowledged masterpieces."

Her quiet tone infuriated him. He gripped her arm.

"Masterpieces! When I get my hands on your precious genius, I'll break his neck."

"Would that help?" Her eyes, resting on him with a strange look, made him relinquish his grasp.

"So you're in love with him."

She got up and moved slowly towards the door. Inexpressibly goaded, he called out: "What you need is a good beating." She gave no sign of having heard.

Alone, Geoffrey stood with clenched fists, his face dark with anger. Something must be done if the name of Desmonde were not to be dragged farther in the mud. Going to the telephone, he called Simla Lodge.

His father answered. "I was on the point of ringing you, Geoffrey. That fellow's exhibition is already closed. The Chief Constable of the county called on me after lunch. He was quite apologetic about proceeding against a member of our family, but he felt that they had no other course than to confiscate these 'works of art.' He also indicated that he would do his best to spare your wife the worst of the publicity."

"What publicity?"

"Your cousin," said General Desmonde, "was taken this morning to the Charminster police station and formally charged with exhibiting an obscene picture. As this is a serious offence against public morals," the General's voice was hard as stone, "he will be brought before the Justices on Monday week."

THE Charminster magistrates' court was filled to the point of suffocation. To Stephen, standing in the dock with a kind of sick impatience, a stolid sergeant beside him, it seemed as if he were enclosed by a wall of misty faces. He knew, thank heaven, that none of his own family was present, but Richard Glyn was there, and the knowledge gave him a sense of support.

Suddenly, the magistrates entered, and took their seats on the bench. Stephen felt his nerves quiver as the clerk of the court, in a sing-song voice, began to read from the paper in his hand.

"Stephen Sieur Desmonde, you are charged with committing a public nuisance in that you did on March seventeenth on the ground floor of premises situated at 5 Cornmarket Street in the city of Charminster, being at that time the lessor and occupier of the said premises, wilfully exhibit three obscene pictures or panels; and you are further summonsed under Section I of the Obscene Publications Act 1857 to show cause why the said pictures or panels, which, upon a complaint being made to the justices, were seized and brought before the court upon a warrant issued under the said Section of the said Act, should not be destroyed."

Arnold Sharp, the solicitor to the City Council, then rose to address the bench. "Your Worships," he began, in a subdued tone, "I need not say with what distress I undertake this task, but in my position I have no alternative. I shall not dwell at length upon the nature of these pictures. Nevertheless I am obliged to indicate the essential features which have led this charge to be professed." Taking up a pointer he stepped forward, tapped one of the panels and launched into an examination of what he called the "decadence, indecency and malice" of the paintings. He concluded, "I submit, your Worships, that these productions are obscene, that they should be destroyed and their perpetrator punished to the full extent of the law." Then he sat down amid a murmur of applause, quickly suppressed.

The chairman of the bench directed his gaze towards Stephen. He was a fair-minded, conscientious man, and his tone was moderate and helpful as he said:

"You have, I understand, refused legal aid and propose to conduct your case yourself. Be good enough to proceed."

With a peculiar tightness at the back of his throat and a heavy thump about the heart, Stephen faced the magistrates.

"In the first place I wish to deny the charge of obscenity that has been brought against me. The purpose of these panels was to symbolize, on the grand scale, one of the greatest tragedies affecting mankind. And I must submit, with due respect, that the ordinary standard of taste is not competent to appraise new movements in the arts. In support of my case for the panels, I propose to call Mr. Richard Glyn, an exhibitor at the Royal Academy, who is now in court."

Immediately, Sharp jumped up "Your Worships, I protest "

The chairman nodded. "The calling of evidence on purely artistic grounds is inadmissible. The most beautiful picture in the world could be obscene."

At this point a massive figure rose from the front row of the gallery and leaned over the rail, chin thrust pugnaciously forward above the knotted red scarf. "If I am not to be called, at least I will be heard "

"Silence in court."

"In my opinion these panels are æsthetic creations of the first rank. Only a vulgar and dirty mind could regard them as indecent "

"Officer, remove that man."

"I'm going," said Glyn, moving up to the door. "If I stay, I'll say something obscene." He went out.

The sensation produced by this outburst lasted for several minutes. When it subsided the chairman turned again to Stephen. "Will you continue?"

"If I am not permitted to call witnesses in support of my contention I can only repeat it."

Sharp got to his feet. "Your Worships," he addressed the bench, "I should like to get from the accused a reply as to why he depicted such explicit and shocking atrocities."

"Will you answer, sir."

"Because I wished to emphasize the brutalities and horrors that are

inseparable from war yet are glossed over or glorified in the name of patriotism."

"You blame such enormities on our own men?"

"Are they different from other men? Is it always the enemy who is the butcher and the barbarian?"

"Your Worships," exclaimed Sharp, "it is well known that the accused did not get near the enemy. I will not further impose his war, or should I say peace, record upon the court. However, I will ask him this." He turned to Stephen. "What right have you to impose such horrors on our quiet, God-fearing community?"

"I wanted to shock people into a permanent resistance to war. I regret nothing that I have done. I would do it all over again."

Sharp smiled grimly. "Your Worships, I will leave you with that unrepentant statement from the prisoner."

He resumed his seat amid applause which was immediately suppressed. The chairman, in a manner now far from sympathetic, looked at Stephen. "Have you anything more to say?"

"There is much that I could say. But it would be futile."

Suddenly exhausted, he started to sit down; but the sergeant, with a tap on the shoulder, indicated that he must stand. There was dead silence as the chairman gave the judgment of the bench.

"We have," he said, "listened with attention to the arguments put before us. We have also studied the pictorial evidence with care. Instead of falling in with the wishes of his sponsors and the decent people of this city, the accused wilfully set out to shock and revolt; and he succeeded. In attitude, he has been defiant. We have the most acute sympathy for his family. Nevertheless, the fact remains that in delineating and exhibiting nudity as he has done, the accused has contravened Section I of the Obscenity Act. We therefore find you, Stephen *Sieur Desmonde*, guilty of the charge brought against you. Under the Act we have power to impose a fine of one hundred pounds and a term of imprisonment of six months but we are reluctant to do so. We therefore fine you the sum of fifty pounds. In addition you will pay the costs of the prosecution. Furthermore, we order the three panels here displayed to be burned."

Having delivered this judgment the magistrates rose and, amid tumultuous applause, the court recessed.

 *Chapter Twelve*

WHEN HE left the court Stephen went straight to the station. In the fury and despair that filled his soul his one desire was to lose himself in some place where he would be unknown. Never would he return to Stillwater.

As he made his way towards the ticket window, he felt a light touch upon his arm. He spun round. It was Claire, her face pale, her eyes luminous. She spoke hurriedly.

"Stephen . . . I thought I should find you here." She was striving to sound calm. "Sit down for a moment. You must be dead tired."

He went with her to a bench. "You were there?"

"Did you imagine I could have stayed away? Oh, Stephen, it was all so stupid and cruel. I longed to be able to help you."

"Haven't you helped me too much already? From the beginning . . . when you bought my pictures."

"So Geoffrey came over and told you?"

"It was part of our interview. Before he knocked me down. He indicated that you'd done it out of charity."

She spoke passionately. "I liked the pictures."

"No, Claire. Let's stop pretending. You simply made me a present of three hundred pounds. How could you like the pictures when you admitted you didn't understand them?"

"But I do," she protested, a little wildly. "I've read books, tried to educate myself in art. I do know what you're striving after, and what you have to contend with in the way of ignorance and prejudice. That's why I suffered so much for you today."

"Yes, they had their fun." His lips drew together. "What really hurts is the loss of my work. They'll burn my panels."

"Never mind. You'll go on painting."

"Yes, I'm not finished, though I am clearing out like a beaten dog. But I swear to heaven I'll never give anyone the chance to do this to me again."

She drew a sharp breath as though summoning all her strength. "Stephen . . . take me with you."

He turned his head and looked at her. He saw that her eyes were filled with tears. He was shocked by her pallor.

"Don't, Claire. You've been compromised enough."

She caught hold of his hand. "Oh, Stephen, I'm so unhappy. I should never have married Geoffrey. I never loved him."

The wild abandon in her tone, the intensity of her feeling startled him. And, in his mood of savage bitterness, he was tempted to accept this offering of herself. He had suffered an almost mortal wound, why should he not strike back? He did not love Claire, but she was a sweet and agreeable companion. They could travel the world together, he could paint to his heart's content.

But almost before the thought was born it died.

"You're sorry for me, Claire." He spoke sombrely. "Pity is a dangerous emotion. But I'm too fond of you to let you wreck your life. I'm not your kind. After six months of me you'd be miserable."

"I'd be happy . . . just being with you."

"No love could survive the kind of life you'd have to lead with me . . . poor lodgings, hardships you've never dreamed of."

"I have the means to make you happy and comfortable."

"That would be the certain death of my art. And if you killed that, Claire, I could only hate you."

There was a quivering silence. Huddled there, on the bare waiting-room seat, she had the look of a wounded bird, broken and pitiful. He broke the long silence, stroking her sleeve.

"One of these days you'll thank me."

"I wonder," she said, in a queer, far-off tone.

The cathedral bells began to peal for evensong. Sighing, she got up and, moving like a woman in a dream, went out of the waiting-room.

He sat a long time after she had gone, crushed by sadness. Then, as the sound of a train broke into his painful meditation, he rose and hastened towards the opposite platform. Heedless of the train's destination he swung on and flung himself into an empty compartment. Now, wave after wave of wretchedness assailed him. Would he ever meet anything but neglect and brutal misinterpretation? He stole a dazed and fascinated glance through the window. In this section the embankment ran high, above a sheer seventy-foot drop. Quickly, with a shudder, he looked away.

What then was he to do? Clear out of England altogether? No. After the tension of the past weeks, he felt physically unable to face the pinchbeck shifts of a further European adventure. I'm not well, he thought, with a stab of realization. If only he could find a quiet room where he might rest. He must be hidden and alone.

The train was bound for London—a local. He recollected his meeting with Jenny Baines. Had she not told him she had a room to let? No one would ever dream of looking for him there.

At Victoria Station he came down the platform and boarded an omnibus. An hour later, he was standing on the doorstep of Number 17 Cable Street. He raised his hand to the brightly polished knocker, feeling, with deepening exhaustion, that if this should fail he scarcely knew where to turn.

The door opened and, framed against the yellow gaslight, Jenny stood before him.

"Good evening." How difficult it was to make his words sound casual. "I wondered if you had a vacant room."

She had been peering at his shadowed figure with doubt but now she gave an exclamation full of warmth.

"Mr. Desmonde! Well, I declare! Do come in, sir."

She shut the door behind him and faced him in the warm little passage with its chequered wallpaper and antlered hatstand. "It's odd, sir, but since we had our chat in the tea room I felt in my bones you might want to come painting Stepney way again."

"So you have a room?"

"That I do, sir. Old Mr. Taplev has the downstairs front. But my upstairs back is vacant. Would you care to have a look?"

"Yes, please."

The back bed sitting room was neat and decently habitable.

"There isn't a deal of space," she remarked, "but it's cosy and clean. I never could bear dirt, Mr. Desmonde."

"It's very nice indeed. I'll take it, if I may."

"Would you want board, sir? The room would be ten shillings without and a pound with."

"I think with board."

"Very good, sir. Now I'll just pop out for something tasty for your supper. Would you fancy a nice breaded veal cutlet?"

"Yes . . . anything, thank you." Shaken by a sudden chill and a stitch in his side, Stephen all at once felt so queer he had to steady himself against the wall.

When she had gone he sat down heavily in the armchair. This tightness in his chest he recognized as the old bronchial trouble. Perhaps if he had more air it might help his shortness of breath. He rose and went to open the window. The sash was slightly warped and, as he strained to tug it upward, a salty warmth, fluid and familiar, came into his mouth. He pressed a handkerchief to his lips, already knowing what to expect. Oh Lord, he thought, not that, again!

At last the hæmorrhage was over. He straightened, took a careful breath. His head felt empty, light as air; his feet were heavy. If only he could close and lock the door and get to bed—he could refuse supper on some pretext and no one need know of this mishap. In the morning he would be recovered. He must not be ill here. Holding himself together, he stretched out his hand towards the door-knob. Everything wavered, whirled in a dazzling arc and retreated, leaving only a black void into which he fell, noiselessly, as though slipping into the well of soft eternal night.

When he came to himself, he became aware that he was in bed, undressed, with a warm stone jar at his feet. And gradually there took shape before him the forms of Jenny Baines and an old man in a striped shirt and braces.

His gaze turned to Jenny. "I think I must have fainted."

"I should think you did, sir. If I hadn't had Mr. Tapley by me, I don't know how I should have got you to bed. I'm just wondering if you shouldn't have the doctor."

"No, no. I'll be perfectly all right. Sorry to have been such a nuisance. If I could just have some milk, please, Jenny."

"That you can, sir. And I'll start some beef tea for you."

They both left him, but in three minutes Jenny was back with a small japanned tray, on which stood a tumbler and a flowered jug. Placing the tray at his bedside she poured him a glass of milk, watched him while he slowly sipped it.

"Shall I leave the light?"

"No. Turn it off, please. Good night, Jenny."

"Good night, sir."

The light was off, the room in darkness, but he still sensed her presence. Then, in a low voice, she said, "You're no trouble, Mr. Desmonde. Don't even think it. You were very good to me, at Clinker Street, and I'm glad to have the chance to pay you back."

The door closed behind her. He lay there, flat on his back in the strange little room, and two tears welled from his shut eyelids and rolled slowly down his cheeks.

ALMOST a week passed before Stephen was able to leave his room. Through the apathy which bound him, he again blessed the chance that had brought him to this house. Jenny had always the untroubled face of one untouched by moods or depressions. Ignoring his embarrassed protestations, she was bent on doing everything within her power to serve him. Every afternoon Joe Tapley came to visit him. Old Joe had worked most of his life on the Thames, for many years as part owner of a coal barge. Now he had retired, invested his savings in a small wharf where he let out moorings, and maintained a skiff for hire.

On Stephen's first day downstairs he tried his legs with a short afternoon walk. When he came back, the Captain had returned from the river. His door stood open, and he called Stephen to his room. Seated by the window, darning a sock, was Jenny.

"Well," Joe said, "how does it feel when you're out?"

"Pretty well, thank you. A trifle shaky."

"You've had a shake, all right. Take a chair."

Stephen sat down, glanced from the one to the other, sensing a disturbing air of complicity. Jenny broke the silence.

"I have to go to my sister-in-law in Margate for a couple of weeks, Mr. Desmonde—Florrie Baines, you know, my poor Alf was her brother. I always do this time of year while she's setting up her fish stall. And Mr. Tapley thinks you didn't ought to stop here. He fends for himself when I'm away. But it's different with you. Being ill like, you'd never manage."

"I see." Stephen felt a sudden weariness.

"So," Jenny resumed, "Mr. Tapley thinks you ought to come along with me. Sea air is wonderful to pick a person up."

"Dr. Margate," the Captain confirmed with a sententious nod. "He'll put you on your pins in no time."

A sudden warmth replaced the chill round Stephen's heart. But he shook his head. "I've abused your kindness enough."

"It's no trouble, sir. Florrie'll be glad to have you. You can pay her for your board just what you pay me."

There was no withstanding their joint persuasions, so well meant, so bent on getting him back to health.

ON THE following Monday, Stephen and his landlady took train for Margate. They arrived at three in the afternoon. Even on the station platform Stephen felt, like an electric shock, the tang and tingle of that magnificent salt sea air, unsurpassable in all of England. Ernie Wood, Florrie's fifteen-year-old nephew, was at the station to meet them with the pony-cart.

Florrie's place was on the harbour, in the Row—a broken sweep of tumble-down buildings facing across the cobblestones, a confused vista of masts, cordage and tidal silt, with the long stretch of the pier and the tumbling grey of the North Sea beyond. Her shop, Number 49, was painted bright blue, with a marble slab behind the open window, and a gilt sign which read: *Florence Baines: Wet Fish: Shrimps and Cockles a Speciality*. Above, approached by a side stone staircase, were the living quarters.

The visitors were shown by Ernie to a snug front parlour occupied by a fine yellow cat. Ernie dashed below to relieve his aunt, who soon appeared, a spare and angular woman of forty, rolling down her cardigan sleeves over her bare, chilled arms. When she had kissed Jenny affectionately, she examined Stephen across her prominent nose, and offered a hand limp and cool as a fillet of sole. "I expect you're ready for tea. Sit down."

She brought from the back regions a large tray holding toast, teapot and a sizzling platter of fried fish. Seated erect at the table, she began to serve her guests.

"And how are things, Florrie?" Jenny asked.

"Mustn't grumble. The stall is a worry."

"Always is, Florrie." Jenny smiled at Stephen, bent on bringing him into the conversation. "Florrie rents a pitch near the promenade. She's famous for her shrimps and cockles."

"I did think I had a name for flounder." Florrie looked hurt.

"Of course you have, dear."

"This we are having is most delicious," Stephen said.

"Plaice," Florrie corrected gloomily. "Help yourself. Plenty more in the sea."

It was apparent to Stephen that he was the object of his hostess's suspicion. For Jenny's sake he felt he must try to dispel it. He had observed Florrie's fondness for the yellow cat, which she fed with morsels from her own plate, and taking his sketch book and a crayon from his pocket he began to sketch the tawny animal. Ten minutes and the thing was done. He removed the sheet, handed it to Florrie.

"Well, I declare . . ." Surprise, fear of being taken in, doubt were reflected in her features until finally she yielded to satisfaction "It's as like Ginger as two peas. So you *are* an artist, after all "

"If it pleases you, I hope you'll accept it."

"You'll never make a living if you give your things away."

Although reproving him, she was plainly pleased. After tea, when he said he would go out for a brief walk, she called after him: "Be careful of the wind. Margate looks straight out to the North Pole "

This geographic fact was accurate, but Stephen enjoyed the cold. And now, with the bracing air filling his lungs, he felt the springs of vigour stir within him. In his first flicker of optimism since the trial, he decided to attempt no work during the next two weeks—he would concentrate on clearing up once and for all this absurd bronchial condition. On the darkening sea-front promenade, with the wind humming and sighing in his ears like a great sea shell, the loose sand swirling about him, his pulse quickened and raising his head he thought, "Perhaps I'll still prove that I am not beaten after all "

IN THE DAYS which followed, Stephen's spirits lifted further. How happy he was with these simple people. The salty life round the harbour, the comings and goings of the smacks, the unloading of the catch—all this diverted his mind from the bitterness of reflection. He increased the length of his walks, slept with his window wide open to the breeze. Best of all was the bathing. It was the brusque tonic which, more than anything, accelerated Stephen's recovery, restored in him the desire to paint and, most glorious of all, the surging knowledge of his own creative powers.

He was much alone—Florrie was supervising her stall, Jenny had her hands full in the shop, while Ernie, every afternoon, made the round with the cart. But one day Florrie proposed a family excursion. "We close half day Wednesday," she said, "so we'll go shrimping. I shall show you where, when and how we catch 'em. And if you want to freeze to death you can have one of your North Pole bathes. That suit you, Michael Angelo?"

"It sounds delightful, Florrie," he agreed amiably.

Punctually at two o'clock on a cloudy Wednesday the party set off in the cart, driving along the shore road. After about five miles Ernie turned from the main highway into a grassy track. Here the pony was turned loose to graze while Florrie led the way through tufted dunes to a secluded sandy bay guarded by rocky promontories and open only to the sea.

"What a lovely spot," exclaimed Stephen. "You'll have a dip with me, Ernie?"

"Got to gather sticks and dig the cockles," Ernie excused himself, and hastily moved off.

"I'm game," said Jenny, and at his look of surprise burst out laughing. "Race you first in."

They changed behind not too adjacent rocks. She reached the water first and struck out ahead of him through the surf. Then she turned and floated with eyes closed. Rounded and young, she seemed quite unchanged by those ten years which had passed since first he knew her. He saw in her a natural attractiveness which made him marvel that she had not found another husband.

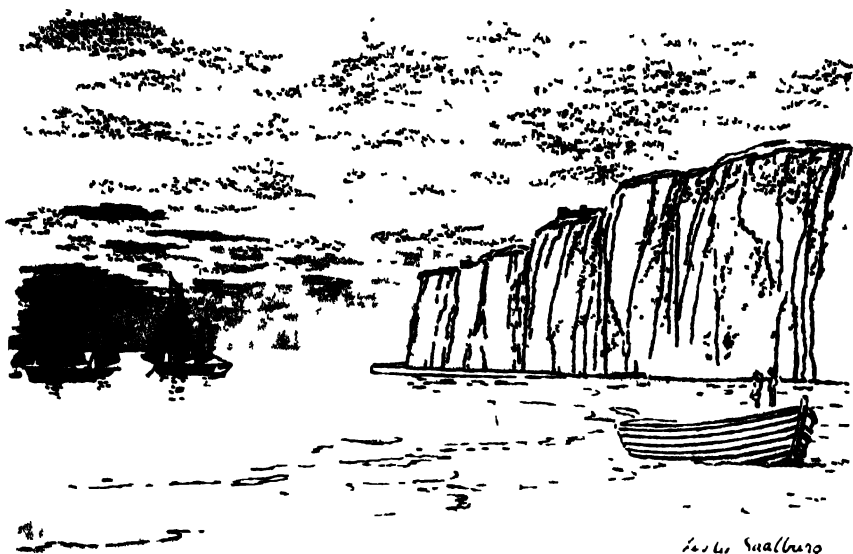
"Jenny, why have you never married again?"

She sat up, with a splash and a splutter.

"A few fellows have come around. But I couldn't fancy them." She smiled suddenly. "You know how it is, Mr. Desmonde. Once bitten twice shy." Before he could speak she darted off towards the shore.

When they had put on their clothes, they walked barefoot to the sheltered side of the cove where Florrie and Ernie were waiting with the shrimp nets, each attached to a long pole with a wooden end bar, like a rake.

"Better late than never," Florrie greeted them caustically. "Take your net from Ernie." Resting the wooden bar on the bottom, she started off



through the shallow water, pushing the net before her, raising a smoky cloud of sand. Ernie and Jermy ranged themselves in line moving slowly behind, and a little out, Stephen followed. In the clear water just ahead he could faintly discern the gelatinous shapes of the shrimps with their delicate antennæ. Translucent, transmitting only the mottled colour of the sand, each had a tiny jet-black eye which seemed to warn it of danger. The whole school scurried hither and thither. Many escaped, but at the end of the drag the nets held a reasonable haul.

"Bring the bucket, Ernie," Florrie commanded. "Only keep the biggest ones, turn the tiddlers back. And you three carry on. I'm going by the rocks for cockles."

The wind blew soft, the sun came out like a shiny orange. In the space of an hour the bucket was filled. Then, from the rocks, where a drift-wood fire smoked and sparked, came Florrie's shout. They joined her. A white cloth had been spread on a smooth dry ledge, weighted at the corners with pebbles, the tea was made, and on the fire stood an iron pot of boiling water.

"I shall have chilblains after this," said Florrie, holding her blue toes to the blaze. Then with a nod towards the shrimps: "In with them."



"Shame," murmured Jenny, with a little shiver as the squirming crustaceans disappeared in the steam. "Poor things."

"They don't feel nothing," Ernie reassured her. "Ain't got nerves like us. That so, Mr. Desmonde?"

Stephen, staring at Jenny, scarcely heard the question. She stood there against a dull sunset, shrimp net on her shoulder, barelegged, skirt tucked back, showing a clean flounced petticoat, blouse open at the throat, her cheeks stung by sea and scudding sand to a bright vermillion, wind-tangled hair a deep blue-black, her figure, short and sturdy, bent slightly forward. He thought to himself, if only I could paint her like that.

The tea was strong, dark, scalding hot. Then Florrie served the cockles, noting the surprise which Stephen evinced on tasting them. "Never thought they'd be so good, eh?" she chided him. "Swallow the juice as well."

They were delicious—each in its white fluted shell, delicate and saline, a fresh sea fruit, holding the essence of the ocean.

Next came the succulent shrimps, straight from the pot. They ate them with thick slabs of cottage loaf spread with country butter. More

tea. Then a cheesecake which Jenny had baked the previous evening.

A silence followed, intensified by the slow, rhythmic rustle of the incoming tide. In a strange and glowing mood of indolence, watching the pale moon take substance in the clear sky, Stephen wished this lovely hour might not quickly end. But at last Florrie stirred. "Getting dark. Better make a bend."

The picnic things were gathered up, the pony reharnessed, the lamp candles lit; Florrie and Ernie took their seats in front. Stephen held out his hand to pull Jenny up beside him in the back. He clasped her fingers tightly, drew her towards him. And in that simple act, he experienced the liberation of an emotion that had burgeoned within him throughout the afternoon, a tide of intoxication which made his heart turn over and left him speechless. Could it be that she shared the emotion? That throbbing pulse, as they sat close together in the darkness, was it from the pounding of his blood? Or was hers pounding too?

They ambled on steadily and all too soon drew into the town, which welcomed them with a glitter of lights, reflected on the oily water of the harbour. At the end of the Row, where the stable was situated, Ernie pressed Jenny to stay while he unharnessed the pony, and Florrie and Stephen set out for the shop. As they walked along the quay, Stephen was conscious of his companion's sidelong scrutiny.

"Jenny's a nice little thing," Florrie began. "She's wise, yet she's simple. Works hard. As for kind-heartedness! I do hope she'll make up with a fine steady feller one of these days. Someone with a good regular wage, as would take proper care of her. For instance, there's a local feller by the name of Hawkins, half owner in a brand new trawler. He's pretty gone on her."

Stephen kept silence, not knowing how to answer. Although her tone was casual, he sensed a note of warning. They went up the stone stairs and into the house. In the kitchen she turned to him with a brightness which convinced him that her remarks had been deliberate. "How about a sandwich? And a drop of ale?"

No, at this moment he could not remain to face Jenny.

"I'm rather tired, I think I'll turn in. Good night, Florrie."

He went to his room, stood for a long moment in perturbed thought from which he tried to rouse himself by reaching for his sketch-book. He made, during the next hour, several pastel drawings of the beach

impression but none of them pleased him. He put the book away, began to undress.

In bed, he stretched at full length in the cool sheets. Through the open window he could see a swath of milky sky in which a few bright stars hung, low and placid. But there was no placidity in him. His skin, smarting from the strong air, seemed on fire.

Presently, through the thin wall he heard the quiet movements, the low-toned conversation of the two women as they prepared to retire. He covered his ears with the pillow. But that sunset vision of Jenny fusing with wind, sea and sand had made an image, clear and shining as Venetian glass, that was less easy to dismiss. At last, drugged with air, he fell asleep.

His two weeks' stay would end on Saturday, in three days' time. And he believed that, by the exercise of self-control, he might get through this brief period without making a fool of himself. On Thursday morning he went to the harbour and set himself to work on a series of marine impressions. After wasting two sheets of paper he went moodily to the Dolphin and lunched on bread and cheese and a pint of shandy-gaff. The afternoon was no better and he gave up in disgust. With the sketching block under his arm, his shoulders hunched, he hung round the old town, killing time.

Was he seriously in love? The situation seemed impossible. He was thirty, subject to a weakness of the chest, disowned by his family, bound irrevocably to that profitless mistress, art. And Jenny? She was a simple working-class woman with no more knowledge of painting than an Eskimo. Besides, hadn't he been warned off by Florrie? But he could not put Jenny from his mind. In desperation, he set out for a brisk walk along the promenade. As he was passing the Grand Hotel, a man in a bowler hat, carrying a square black bag, emerged from the swing-doors. There came an instant of mutual recognition.

"Dash it all, if it isn't Desmonde! What a surprise!"

It was Harry Chester. He was wearing a seedy overcoat. His face had coarsened; his eyes were shifty. Seizing Stephen's hand he shook it effusively. "Come along. You must have a drink with me."

They went into the bar of the hotel, where Chester's foot automatically sought the brass rail and he tilted back his hat.

"What brings you to Margate?" Stephen asked when Harry had ordered their drinks.

"Business, my boy. The South Coast is my beat."

"You've given up painting?"

"Good Lord, yes. I have a damn good job." He delivered the fiction with an affable smile. "Promoting the cleanliness of the nation. I sell soap for a first-rate firm."

"Do you hear anything of Lambert?" Stephen asked.

"Last thing I heard of Philip he was designing wallpaper for some potty little firm in Chantilly." He paused, and shook his head. "Of course . . . you know about Emma?"

"No."

"Don't you read the newspapers? One night, about six months after you left, she went up for her act. They said at the inquest that the track was wet, not well enough lit, but in my opinion it was she who was too well lit. She flubbed the take-off, lost her balance, landed on her head and broke her neck."

Stephen was silent. The news, while it shocked him, had a strange remoteness. Nor had he time to dwell upon it, for suddenly, with a glance at the clock above the bar, Chester tossed off his drink and exclaimed, "Good Lord, I've only seven minutes to catch my train. Good bye, old man. Been wonderful seeing you. Thanks for the drink." Resetting his bowler to a more rakish angle and swinging his black bag of samples, he went off with a swagger.

Stephen paid the reckoning and made his way through the falling darkness of the Row. After this meeting, with its reminders of that self-deluded period in France, it was a relief to contemplate the cheerful ordinariness that he would find in the warm kitchen of No. 49. He mounted the steps with sudden briskness.

Within, Ernie sat at the table. Jenny was busy at the stove.

"Thank goodness," she greeted him with a cheerful face. "I been keeping your supper. We've had ours a good half-hour."

The warmth of her welcome, the glow in the homely little room, touched him like a blessing. He sat down beside Ernie.

Tipping open the oven door with her foot, Jenny took a dish towel, brought out a deep platter of shepherd's pie, placed it on the table. "Mind, it's hot. Move over, Ernie."

When he sat down and began to eat, she took the chair opposite, observing his appetite with approval.

"You've picked up down here."

"I'm a new man, Jenny. And owe it all to you."

"Go on with you! Try these pickled onions."

Later, as she dried the dishes, a sudden idea came to Stephen.

"You wouldn't care to come to the cinema, Jenny?"

She gave him a quick smile, but shook her head. "I'm not one for the pictures really. Especially a beautiful night like this."

He saw the round silver moon rising over the harbour pool. He said: "Then let's take a walk."

She looked pleased. "Would be nice, after being cooped in all day. I'll have my coat on in a jiffy."

Then, asking him to tell Florrie they'd be back in half an hour, she led the way downstairs and they set off towards the promenade. The night was warm and clear, the moon at its dazzling full, the Milky Way a path of silver. On the benches along the promenade, lovers sat holding hands. The sea shimmered, a great sea serpent rustling its sequined scales. Too quickly they came to the end of the walk and Stephen said:

"It's so light, shall we go along the sands?" She made no objection and as they stepped out on the wide waste of sand he reflected aloud: "I feel as if I'd known you all my life."

She made no reply. And in silence they continued over the deserted beach upon which white shells gleamed like fallen stars. He turned to her. "Let's rest a little, and look at the moon."

They found a sheltered hollow in the dunes, and Jenny spread out her coat for them to sit on.

"It is a shame we have to leave day after tomorrow," she murmured presently. "Margate is nice this time of year."

"I have certainly enjoyed it."

She did not look at him; her gaze was straight ahead. "I shouldn't wish to seem pushing, sir, but I was hoping you'd keep your room in Stepney on for a while. With you and Captain Tapley in the house there's such a nice settled feeling."

"I should like to. But I ought to be on the move again."

"It's terrible the way you've lived, no one to look after you." There was distress in her voice. "Do you really have to?"

He did not answer. To be so near her was more than he could endure. He passed an arm firmly round her waist.

"You shouldn't do that, sir," she protested.

"Don't call me sir, Jeanny." And suddenly he kissed her. Her lips were full and warm as a plum on a sunny wall.

His heart was beating like mad. Anything he had known before was nothing compared to this sweet intoxication. He saw that her breath came quickly, that her eyes were tightly shut. When he touched her lips again she returned his kiss. Her arms reached out and twined themselves about his neck.

At last he raised his head and looked into her eyes.

"Jenny, you do care for me?"

"You know I do." She clung to him. "I always have."

He took her small hand, gritty with sand, and held it tight.

"Jenny, if you'll have me, we'll get a licence tomorrow at the registry office. We're in it together now, for better or worse."

Chapter Thirteen

A GOOD seven years later, on an autumn morning in the year 1928, before the first pencil of light had penetrated the back ground-floor bedroom in Cable Street, Stephen awoke. For a while he lay still, conscious of his wife beside him; then, without disturbing her, he got up and dressed in serge trousers and the thick blue woollen jersey she had knitted for him. He went along the passage, knocked three times on Joe Tapley's door and entered the kitchen.

The kettle had already been filled for him the night before and the table was prepared, as usual. The Captain joined him and they sat down to a breakfast cooked by Stephen. When they had finished, Tapley said, "Wind's from the west."

Stephen nodded, and bent forward to the old man's ear.

"We ought to get that cloud effect this morning."

He rose, filled a fresh cup of tea and took it to the bedroom, where, covering the cup with the saucer, he placed it on the table by the bed. Then he and Tapley went out together.

At half past six the alarm clock whirled, Jenny opened her eyes,

blinked at the cup of tea beside her, felt it to be stone cold and immediately got up. By eight o'clock she had dressed, breakfasted, lit the fire beneath the scullery boiler and taken up Miss Pratt's morning tray. At a quarter to nine Miss Pratt, the occupant of the upstairs back room, went off to her infants' class at the Stepney Board School. Jenny tidied up, made all the beds, and put her head out of the back door in exploratory fashion. Today was her wash-day.

As she sorted out the linen she began to sing. She counted herself a lucky woman to be privileged to love and serve this extraordinary man. She watched him in all his moods—so different from her own balanced common sense—with tender and possessive wonder. His carelessness in respect of meals, clothing and conventional obligations made her shake her head. Yet his desire to paint she looked upon with kindly tolerance. It was a gentleman's occupation that gave him pleasure and relaxation and took him out into the good fresh air. For if she had a worry, it was his health. She did not like that cough, now so permanent it seemed a part of him, and which he completely ignored.

When her washing was blowing lustily on the clothes-line, she made her lunch, then cut up meat and chopped vegetables for a stew. The Glyns were coming to supper. The thought pleased her—she liked Anna, and she knew that it did Stephen good to see Richard.

Towards two o'clock the front doorbell pealed. She answered, and before her stood a spare, clean shaven man in a somewhat worn trench coat. He raised his hat. "Is Mr. Desmonde at home?"

"No," she said. "I am Mrs. Desmonde."

"I wonder if I might talk with you for a moment. My name is Charles Maddox. I used to be your husband's agent."

"Please come in," she said. In the little front parlour, spotless and chilly, with its plush-covered furniture, upright piano, and fern in the window, she faced him warily.

"Mrs. Desmonde," he said, "I want to ask you to persuade your husband to permit me to handle his work. I have not for eight years had a Desmonde canvas in my gallery. While I am sure," he threw a quick glance of interrogation, "in his studio there are scores."

"Yes," she answered mildly, nodding towards the shed which Stephen had built for a studio. "But after they used him so bad, he vowed he'd never show another picture in his life."

"That was long ago, Mrs. Desmonde. Now I have reason to believe that his paintings would find a discriminating market."

"My husband," she articulated the word with tender pride, "my husband doesn't care a button for money."

"But surely a larger income would make things much easier." He glanced round the little parlour, wondering how a person of Desmonde's taste could bear to live in it. "You could have a larger home. You could have help in the house, a good servant."

She laughed mirthfully, charmingly, as though he had made an excellent joke. "I *was* a servant, Mr Maddox, and I hope a good one. I tell you, I shouldn't be happy if we lived any different than we do now. We shouldn't be one half so cosy."

He gazed at her with growing respect. "I suppose I couldn't look round the studio?" he ventured.

Her refusal was kindly. "It might, p'raps, be as well to speak to Mr Desmonde first."

He picked up his hat and rose. "You might be good enough to tell him that I called."

"Certainly. But I shouldn't build too much on it if I was you."

AT FIVE o'clock the doorbell rang again and Jenny hurried to admit her visitors. "I'm so sorry," she said, when she had greeted them, "Stephen isn't home yet."

"We're ahead of time." Glyn hung his hat and scarf on the hall stand. "By the way, did you have a call today from Maddox?"

"Yes," Jenny said guardedly.

"You let him have a couple of Stephen's paintings, I hope."

"Good gracious, no. I couldn't, without permission."

"I see," said Glyn. "Well, you two women can get together and gossip. I'll go into the studio."

He went through the kitchen and entered the ramshackle wooden shed where Stephen worked. On an easel in the centre of the floor was a large incomplete painting of the river, while at the farther end unframed canvases of assorted sizes were stacked.

Richard took a good look at the unfinished work, then he removed the painting, placed another upon the easel and sat down on a broken sofa to study it—a process he repeated several times.

At fifty, Glyn had an air of maturity. The untamed Bohemian spirit that had made him flout orthodoxy had been mellowed by well-merited success. His work had been accepted as a worthy contribution to English art. Yet now, as he pondered over Stephen's work in its audacity of colour, its disregard of the conventional rules, its sense of mystery, of something withheld, he knew that the paintings were not only far superior to his own, they were fit to hang in company with the great. And as he considered how, during these past seven years, Desmonde had laboured without ceasing, leading the life of a recluse, nursing a dangerous sense of persecution, he felt that it was time to act, to break at last this sustained complex of withdrawal.

Recognition—that was the solution. It had done much for him. It would do everything for Desmonde. He had been in consultation with Maddox, and when that the agent's visit had failed in its purpose he saw that he must act upon his own initiative.

He picked up a painting he had already singled out—*Hampstead Heath*—and wrapped it in paper. He went out into the back alley and down to the corner pub, where he asked the barman to hold the package until later that evening. It was not quite six o'clock when he got back to the yard and entered the kitchen.

Stephen had just arrived. As they shook hands, Glyn could not help thinking how great was the change in his friend since the days when he had first known him. Standing there, erect, in his rough paint-stained clothes, an old scarf draped across his shoulders, he conveyed the impression of a man supported by nothing but his own intensity. But the high colour on his cheekbones and the extraordinary brightness of his eyes gave to his expression a vivid sense of life.

"How is old mother Thames coming along?" Glyn asked.

"I'm having trouble with her—as usual. What have you been doing lately?"

"I'm starting a portrait of Lord Hammersley."

"You're doing lots of portraits now. Isn't he the brewer?"

Glyn glanced sideways, wondering if there was not the slightest irony in the other's tone, but Desmonde's expression had remained open and cheerful. Then Jenny, her face reddened by the stove, came forward and cheerfully bade them be seated.

It was a plain but satisfying meal. Glyn set to heartily, yet could not

but remark how indifferent was Stephen's appetite. But his mood was light-hearted, the beauty and life in his eyes were irresistible as he described how, after a barge had almost run him down in midstream, he had engaged in argument with the skipper.

"It was a good slanging match," he concluded gaily "After it I completely lost my voice "

"What!" exclaimed Jenny, with a glance towards him

"It was nothing. When I'm working I've no need to talk "

Glyn turned to Stephen "This kind of life you've fallen into it's not good for you. We must get you out of it."

Stephen smiled "And how would you set about it?"

"By ensuring that you have the rewards you so richly deserve

"I don't want success I've no time for it Now that I'm free from the desire for it I can give myself unreservedly to my work

"Now look here, Desmond " Glyn spoke a trifle heatedly "Let's be sensible Do you propose never to show your work?"

"Yes In my early years I wanted passionately to show my paintings, to gain renown Now I simply do not care I love my things, I like them round me. Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty makes him the severest critic of his own works And don't blame me for that statement It was Keats who made it."

Glyn seemed about to embark on an explosive harangue, but he checked it. Adopting a mild tone, he said, "I think it's high time you came out of hiding Now, I have two tickets for Covent Garden *Don Giovanni*. Thursday night Will you come?"

Stephen shook his head "I'm too busy now "

"Do go, Stephen," Jenny said.

Desmond looked from one to the other, a faint sign of strain appearing on his face. It was in this very isolation which Glyn decried, in his work, in the happy obscurity of his life with Jenny that he found the peace that saved him A refusal was on the tip of his tongue, but the desire to please his wife and Glyn caused him to relax his rule

"All right," he said. "I'll come."

FOR SOME years nothing of consequence had disturbed the tranquillity of Stephen's life. But now, set in motion by Glyn's visit, a sequence of unexpected events began to harass him.

Coming out of the opera at Covent Garden, he had run into Claire, grown older and more severe in appearance. From her expression—startled, then suddenly fixed—he knew how painful this meeting was for her. She was shocked when he told her where he had been living all these years, and it was evident that she had later given his address to Caroline, for after some days a letter arrived from Stillwater. Jenny placed it on Stephen's plate to await his return from the river. When he had eaten his supper he opened it, then, observing her look of eager interest, he said:

"It's from Caroline. She wants me to meet her."

"You will, won't you?"

"What earthly good could it do?"

"Surely it's good to see your sister. She's your own flesh and blood."

He had to smile, not only at the reproach, but at her earnestness. He touched her hand. Her reasonableness, the open simplicity of her nature seemed always to bring him back from that strange country into which he strayed alone. He realized how much he owed to her abundant, healthy good temper, to her understanding, her instinctive knowledge of human nature.

"I love you, Jenny. And because of that I'll go."

On Wednesday of the following week, though he felt unaccountably tired, he set out for Victoria Station, where Caroline had said she would await him. He got off the bus and pushed through the crowded platforms. By the bookstall he saw a short, middle aged woman, her hair streaked with grey, dressed in an ill fitting brown tweed costume. When she caught sight of him, her anxious face lighted up, she came forward and, with a little nervous gasp, greeted him. It was his sister.

"What a wretched morning," she exclaimed. "My umbrella blew inside out."

"You'd be glad of a cup of coffee. Shall we go to the buffet?"

They entered the station restaurant, and when they had ordered Caroline said, "I suppose I'd better begin at the beginning. We are leaving Stillwater. We are forced to sell it."

He looked at her in surprise. "But where are you going?"

"To one of Mould's brick bungalows with no view, no garden, and only four small rooms. It's unbearable."

She could not fail to note that the news disturbed him, but he said comfortingly, "I've often heard you complain that Stillwater was far

too large and old-fashioned. It may be that you'll find the bungalow more convenient."

"How can you say that?" she exclaimed. "Stillwater has been the home of the Desmondes for two hundred years. Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

"Yes," he said, after a moment's reflection. Then he asked, "Who is buying it?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Mould?"

She nodded, bitter tears starting to her eyes.

"How did this ever come about?"

"It was Mother. You know how she always was . . . no idea of the value of money. Just twelve months ago we discovered that she was in the hands of moneylenders, who threatened Father with a lawsuit if he didn't pay up."

"How large an amount?"

"Almost ten thousand pounds, with the exorbitant interest charged. It was sheer extortion, blackmail if you like, but Father decided we must pay. Better to be ruined with honour, he said, than to face disgrace. . . ."

As she broke off, Stephen said, "In a way I always admired her for doing exactly what she wanted. Where is she now?"

Caroline answered in a suppressed voice. "In a private asylum in Dulwich."

He stared at her blankly.

"Stephen, if you'd only stayed at home, gone into the Church, helped Father keep control over Mother, we'd all still be happy at Stillwater." She leaned forward. "Even now, it isn't too late. Father needs you——"

"Carrie," he interrupted her, "you know I'm married. Do you want us both down there in your four-roomed bungalow?"

"Then there's nothing more to be said." She sighed, drew on her damp cotton gloves, picked up the ruin of her umbrella. Her head was turned from him, and a surreptitious glance revealed that she was weeping quietly.

Her sorrow left him wretched and subdued, attacked by a sudden realization of his uselessness in the material world. In this family crisis Caroline must naturally look to him for help. Yet he could not, or would not, give it. No human attachment, no force on earth could

divert him from the course that he had chosen. Abruptly, he shook off a sudden sense of giddiness. He felt confoundedly seedy—his wet feet were icy, and he was aware of that strange, recurrent numbness in his throat.

They left the buffet and walked back into the station. The departure board indicated that a train would leave for Halborough in three minutes' time.

"If I rush, I'll get it," Carrie exclaimed nervously. "Thank you for meeting me, Stephen. Good bye."

He took her to the barrier, they shook hands hurriedly and awkwardly, and he watched until she boarded the train. As he came out of the station the newsboys were calling the early editions of the evening papers. He stopped short and, with a sickening sense of dismay, read the headlines on the placards: *Academy Sensation: Scandal of the Charmingster Pan-* ' ' ' *ed.*

It was five o'clock when he reached Cable Street and there, pacing up and down at the corner bus stop, was Glyn.

"Jenny told me I might catch you here." Glyn seemed disturbed. "Let's have a drink. I must talk to you."

Stephen accompanied the other across the road and into the bar of the corner pub. Glyn ordered two whiskies served hot. When the grog arrived, Stephen gulped down a mouthful of the steaming liquid. He was struggling to keep his nerves under control.

"So now you know," Glyn said suddenly. "I took your *Hampstead Heath* and sent it to the Academy."

"Without consulting me."

"If I had, would you have let me have it?"

"No . . . never."

At the violence of the reply Glyn shot a quick glance at Stephen. "Blame me as much as you please. But remember, I tried to act for the best. The meeting of the selection committee took place at eleven o'clock this morning. You probably know the procedure. The members sit in a semi-circle of armchairs. As the paintings are brought in one at a time and placed on a throne, they vote on them. Acceptance is indicated by raising a hand, rejection by keeping the hands down. It was an extra-poor lot this year.

"We were getting down to the thin end of the submissions when your

Heath came in—as a matter of fact I'd arranged it that way. And it really hit the spot. I could tell at once that the men round me were impressed. When I raised my hand five members followed suit—all from the new group coming on in the Academy."

In spite of his determination to remain detached, Stephen felt a tremor go through his limbs

Glyn went on, "There's another group—the old guard. I hadn't expected this lot to like your picture, and it was obvious they didn't. However, I felt sure you were in, when Sir Moses Stanley suddenly got up—you know him, he paints nothing but cows. He hobbled over to the easel, shook his head, then slewed round and said

"I sincerely hope the committee will remember its responsibilities to the nation before passing favourable judgment on this work. I have been a member of the Royal Academy for more than thirty years. During that time, by setting my face sternly against all foreign influence, I have helped to keep our heritage undehled. This picture is clearly unwholesome. It is distorted and pernicious. It is no more like Hampstead Heath than my foot. It is rank socialism."

"There was much more in this vein," Glyn said. "I was boiling mad. There was your beautiful painting and here was this uncomprehending cow-fancier, with the other die hards leaning over to congratulate him. I got on my feet.

"You say that our responsibility is to suppress. I say it is to support and encourage. Every original artist of the past hundred years has been the victim of this sort of assassination—such men as Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin—but in spite of that their work lives. And I'll wager this—the painting before us now will still be alive when everyone in this room is dead and forgotten."

Glyn drank, then shook his head. "There was a hollow pause. Then the president proposed that the vote be taken and I began to sense that in general the committee was favourable. I'll swear to it. They were for you. The hands were ready to go up when all at once Peters, another member of the old guard, suddenly said: 'One moment, please. I must inform you that the painter of this picture is the man responsible for the notorious Charminster panels, who was convicted in open court of producing and exhibiting obscene art. How can we sanction work from such a source?'

"I jumped up again. 'Are we judging panels that were burned through ignorance seven years ago, or this painting before us now?'"

"I can't remember all I said, but it was no use. Even those who would otherwise have supported you were afraid to risk a scandal. There was only one thing for me to do. I resigned on the spot. And I'm glad I did. I've been getting soft in these last years, Desmonde, my work isn't near as good as it used to be. And now I hope you're not angry with me."

Stephen gazed at the other in silence, his features pale and impassive. The long recital had carried him through anger and distress to a final indifference. But the hurt was deep. If only Richard had left him alone! Still, he could bear no rancour. He held out his hand.

Glyn clapped him fraternally on the shoulder.

"Let's go, Desmonde. I'll see you home. And if there's trouble ahead, we'll bloody well stand up to it."

THIS startling incident at the Academy was a windfall to the popular press.

The new scandal rekindled the ashes of the old. A drawing of Stephen standing in the dock at Charminster was reproduced. A journalist read by millions wrote an article under the heading "Art Run Amuck." There were snickers in the livelier publications, jokes on the vaudeville stage, cartoons in the picture weeklies.

During the days that followed, Stephen went on working with that disregard of exterior events which now took the form of contempt. Because he felt so deeply, he had learned to impose upon himself a rigid self-control that enabled him to sustain misfortune with outward calmness. Yet there were moments when life seemed so frightening he felt he could not face it. He had lost something he greatly prized, the sense of anonymity, of being unnoticed in the common flow of humanity. The strain told upon him and, even when the hubbub began to slacken, left him physically worn down.

One Saturday when he got home from Tapley's jetty, he felt thoroughly done up and his throat was peculiarly numb. Jenny had his lunch ready, and while he ate she sat at the table opposite him, watching in silence. When he had finished, she washed the dishes, removed her apron and picked up her knitting. He began, drawn by her homely warmth, to relate the events of his morning, but his voice cracked and

his words came in a husky whisper. His wife's eyes lifted sharply from her work.

Articulating with difficulty, he said: "All day I've felt I was going to lose my voice. And now I have."

"You've caught cold." She spoke with the mild accusation of one who continually reproved him for neglecting himself, yet this was no more than a screen for the anxiety that gripped her. "I shall go round for that new Doctor Gray."

She had wanted for some time to have him examined by the local panel practitioner. She slipped on her raincoat, went out, and in a short time was back with the information that Doctor Gray would call as soon as he returned from his afternoon round of visits.

No sooner had she concluded than Stephen was again able to speak in a perfectly normal manner.

"You see," he said, "you've made a fuss about nothing. It's just nerves, or something equally futile."

She gazed after him, distressed, as he went into the studio to work. An hour passed and she began to wonder if the doctor would come at all. At that point, the doorbell rang and she found on the threshold a young man.

"I'm Doctor Gray. Where is the patient?"

Jenny took him into the kitchen and, having called Stephen, left them together.

The doctor put down his bag, removed his hat but not his overcoat, with the air of one sorely pressed for time.

"What seems to be the trouble?" he asked.

"Something quite trivial. I keep losing my voice."

"Have you any pain?"

"None at all. I have been conscious of a slight numbness in my throat. Imagination, no doubt."

Doctor Gray made an impatient sound with his tongue. Another neurosis, he suspected. Yet this man didn't look like an hysteric.

"Let's have a look at you. Strip to the waist and sit down."

Stephen did as he was bid. The doctor had taken from his bag a round mirror which he adjusted upon his forehead and, directing a beam of light upon the reflecting surface of a laryngoscope held at the back of the patient's throat, he made a thorough inspection. Then he put on

his stethoscope and examined Stephen's chest. Finally, he evinced a certain interest in the ends of Stephen's fingers

"You may dress now " The doctor returned his instruments to the bag. "How long have you had a cough?"

"I've been bothered with bronchitis off and on for a number of years. I always had a weak chest "

"Bronchitis, eh? Can you remember the first time you had a bad cold, with a pain in your side that just wouldn't clear up?"

Stephen's thoughts went back to the drenching day of the Channel crossing and the weeks it Netters that had followed it

"Yes," he said "About fifteen years ago "

"Ever had any hæmorrhages subsequently?"

"Yes Twice " Stephen suppressed the attack he had suffered in Spain during the war y "

"How many years ago was the first? Could one say about fourteen?"

A vivid picture of the past came to Stephen—Dom Arthaud bending over him in the bare, whitewashed room.

"Yes "

The doctor, having washed his hands at the kitchen sink, was drying them on a dish-towel. "You've had chest trouble all that time and a couple of hæmorrhages? And you never bothered to find out what was causing it?"

"I never regarded it as serious And I was always too busy "

"Doing what?"

"Painting I'm an artist "

"Ah!" Doctor Gray, from solid industrial Manchester, compressed into that exclamation a wealth of ironic comprehension Suddenly a thought struck him. "Good Lord, you're not the fellow that's been in the papers?"

"Does it make any difference?"

"No, no Of course not "

He gazed at Stephen curiously and, despite his professional insensibility, not altogether without feeling What chain of circumstances, what persistent self-neglect had brought this chap, obviously a gentleman, to such a pass? What was one to make of such a case? Worse still, what could one say?

• He sat down on the arm of a chair.

"I have to tell you that you have advanced pulmonary tuberculosis. You have an old-standing lesion in the right lung. And now the left is acutely infected. Your larynx has become involved."

Stephen had turned pale. He steadied himself against the table. "But I don't understand. I've always been able to get about, I've felt all right. . . ."

"That's the curse of this thing." Gray shook his head in a kind of gloomy rancour. "Can be quiescent, then suddenly goes on the rampage. That's what has happened with you."

"I see. What is to be done about it?"

"You ought to get away to a sanatorium. At least a year."

"A year! Should I be allowed to paint?"

Doctor Gray shook his head. "You'd be in bed, my dear sir, flat on your back, in the open air."

Stephen was staring straight ahead. "No," he said, "I couldn't. I must paint. If I can't go on with my work it'll kill me."

"If you do go on" The doctor broke off, shrugging.

"If I stay here and go on working, what is the outlook?"

Doctor Gray started to reply, then stopped. It was not his nature to equivocate, yet something prevented him from bluntly communicating the truth. He said: "One can never tell. With luck you may go on for quite a bit."

He pulled a prescription pad from his overcoat pocket, wrote briskly, tore off the slip and handed it to Stephen. "Get this made up. A tonic, and a spray for your throat. Take care of yourself, drink as much milk as you can, and push down a tablespoonful of cod-liver oil three times a day. Ask your wife to come in and see me at the surgery in the morning. The fee is three and six."

When Stephen had paid him, he picked up his bag, put on his hat and left the room.

The front door closed behind him. Stephen stood quite motionless. Jenny came in from the scullery and from her expression, fixed and frightened, he knew that she had overheard everything. "You will go away, won't you, Stephen?"

"Never. I won't leave you, and I can't give up my work."

The suddenness of the blow had stunned her. Fiercely she blamed herself for accepting his glossing over of his symptoms. Holding back

her tears because she knew how much he hated them, she begged him to be sensible. But he shook his head.

"These doctors don't know everything. Perhaps I'm not as bad as he makes out. In any case, he says it's only fresh air I need." He lifted his head as at a sudden inspiration. "Margate! It had always done him good. When he was so ill before, had it not completely cured him? All at once, that sporadic optimism so characteristic of his condition caused his spirits to rebound. While she looked at him, rent by the deepest anxiety, he gave her the shadow of a smile. "We'll pack up here, let Miss Pratt and Tapley fend for themselves. And if Florrie'll have us, we'll go to Margate."

Chapter Fourteen

IN THE little back kitchen above the fish shop Florrie sat warming herself at the stove with the cat upon her knee, gazing towards Jenny, who occupied a seat by the table. A pot of tea and a plate of bread and butter stood on a tray between the two women.

"Puss is shedding," Jenny said.

"Always does this time of year," Florrie stroked the animal, then flicked the yellow fluff from her fingers.

"How long now, Flo, since we've been with you?"

"Near seven weeks. Time does fly."

"You are good about it. It's an imposition really. Only, the air does seem to help him," Jenny paused. "Do you see an improvement, Flo?"

"I see a change—and a big one," Florrie took a slow sip of tea, then put down her cup. "And the sooner you face up to it, the better for you, my girl."

Jenny lowered her head, compressing her lower lip with her teeth—she had fought hard in these past weeks and would go on fighting harder. Yet it was difficult to keep discouragement from overwhelming her. What anguish she had endured, night after night, listening to his deep, hollow cough.

"I wish he'd come for his tea," she said, looking towards the door. "But it's no use to fetch him."

"Why a man in his condition should want to go on painting in that

front room" Florrie turned up her eyes. "Here, you haven't 'arf drunk your tea. Let me give you some fresh."

"No, Flo. I've turned against it, like."

"Don't you want no bread 'n' butter?"

Jenny shook her head.

"You *have* gone off your feed. At breakfast you didn't more'n touch your kipper. And come to think of it, these other mornings" She broke off. Jenny had coloured painfully. Florrie's expression registered incredulity, then shocked suspicion.

"It ain't that?" she said, at last, slowly.

Jenny, with averted head, did not answer.

"Oh, no," Florrie said, in a suppressed voice. "Oh, it makes me boil. After he's lived off you all these years, letting you work and slave for him, while he mooches around, slapping paint on a piece of canvas. And now, when he's about done for, to leave you pregnant——"

"Don't, Flo," Jenny interrupted fiercely. "Don't blame him."

"Well, I wish you joy I'm sure." Florrie spoke stiffly. "But how you'll manage, my gel, is quite another question."

"Don't be hard, Flo. You know I have a good pair of hands."

"Hands, yes," Florrie agreed gloomily. "But oh, my gel, where was your head?" she paused. "Have you told him?"

"I shan't till we get home. He'll be more like himself then."

With an effort, Florrie cut off the exasperated reply that rose to her lips. Soon after his arrival Stephen had begun to deteriorate and now his decline had become rapid. Her own doctor, whom she had called in a fortnight ago, had told her that Stephen's condition was hopeless and that another hæmorrhage, which might occur at any moment, must prove fatal.

"Have it your own way." She shook her head resignedly. "But why you should go on sacrificing yourself fair beats me."

"There's some'at about him that you, nor anyone else, won't never understand. He's made me happy."

A sound in the passage abruptly terminated the conversation. Stephen came into the room.

"Am I late for tea?" he said, and smiled.

To see the smile on the tight-skinned, bony face drove a lance into Jenny's breast.

In a matter-of-fact voice, pouring for him, she said: "We would have called you. But I thought you might be finishing up."

"As a matter of fact, I have finished. And it rather pleases me." He accepted a slice of bread and butter, sat down at the window. "It's as good as I can make it"

"And what's to happen to it now?" Florrie asked

"Who knows?" he answered lightly.

Jenny could sense the contained excitement of his mood. She said sympathetically "You've been a long time over that one"

"Six months. It was difficult to convey the sense of elemental things—the river, earth, air and water—and still preserve a harmony with the central theme"

"I hope it don't start such a nasty mess up as you 'ad with that there last one", Florrie said

"I hope not" He smiled "This seems quite a respectable painting. And I promise it won't be exhibited"

"You really 'ave me beat. Don't it matter to you that you won't make a penny on this picture?"

"No. All that matters is that I've done it" He got up "I'm going out now for a bit of a stroll"

"You shouldn't," Jenny said quickly "It's cold outside"

"I must have a walk" He looked at her kindly "You know that fresh air is good for me"

She came with him into the hall and helped him to wrap up in the thick coat she had bought him, gave him the stick he now used

His progress along the street was slow. Each foot seemed weighted as he made his way towards the sea front. At the entrance to the esplanade there stood a circular rotunda, with mirrors in the windows, and as he passed he saw his drawn reflection in the glass. He grimaced and withdrew his gaze.

Presently he reached a bench which afforded an open prospect of the sea. A superb pale sunset, a streak of salmon merging to primrose and faint green, was clear and delicate against the dove-grey sea.

Ever since his boyhood, he reflected, he had been obsessed by the desire to grasp the beauty imprisoned beneath the surface of things. He had pursued his destiny, yet who would ever understand the loneliness, the hours of sadness—broken by fits of momentary exultation—he had

endured? He had no regrets; indeed, there was a strange peace upon him. Only out of pain and unhappiness, out of the hostility of the world, could he have created beauty.

It was worth the price that he had paid.

The great culminating canvas he had now completed was the product of the strange nexus between his sickness and his art. It gave him an exalted sense of being above time and death, partaking of the eternal. The more ill he had become the more mysteriously his powers had been renewed. Yet he knew that he was doomed. The fount of physical energy within him had ceased to flow. He thought I shall speak to Jenny tonight. It's time we were home. And again Raphael died at thirty seven. Why should I complain?

He got up and started back towards the Row. As he did so, a cheerful voice hailed him. It was Ernie, in a dark suit and bowler, with a rolled umbrella in his hand.

"Well! I fancied I might find you here." He slowed his pace, adjusting it tactfully to Stephen's. "Aunt Florrie asked me to look out for you and fetch you back. It's not often you have a visitor, and they didn't want you to miss him."

"A visitor? Who is it?"

"Search me. Regular toff by the look of him."

Stephen's brows drew together with a nervous constriction. Had his father or Uncle Hubert come to see him? As they turned the corner at the harbour he saw a large black car standing outside the shuttered entrance to the fish shop.

The door opened at once, and Florrie let them in. "There's a man to see you. A foreigner."

Stephen took off his coat, hung it on a peg with his hat and scarf and went into the front room. This was a small apartment, seldom used except for company, and at present completely disarranged by Stephen's easel and the large canvas upon it. A fire sparked damply in the small black-leaded grate. Occupying the one easy chair, engaging Jenny in conversation, was a short, sallow-faced man who, as Stephen appeared, rose quickly to his feet.

"Monsieur Desmonde, I am happy to meet you."

His manner matched his impeccably severe suit, the dark pearl in his cravat, his glossy shoes. Stephen had recognized him at once and barely

glanced at the visiting-card which the other presented to him as Jenny excused herself and left the room

"My dear Monsieur Desmonde, it is so good to make your acquaintance at last "

"Haven't we met before?"

"But where, my good sir?"

Stephen considered the dealer calmly "In Paris, fifteen years ago. I was broke, starving in fact. I tried to sell you my paintings. You wouldn't even look at them "

Tessier's eye flickered slightly but his manner was proof against embarrassment. He threw out his hands in charming apology.

"Then I assure you the shoe is now on the other foot. For I have come all the way to London to seek you out. Only by the greatest perseverance did I obtain your address here, from Monsieur Glyn "

"I wish you had not put yourself to so much trouble."

"My dear sir, it is a pleasure." Tessier resumed his chair. "Recently there has been in Paris a growing interest in your work. Some time ago one of your paintings, *Convent Sisters Returning from Church*, belonging to the colourman Campo was shown in the window of Salomon et Cie, a relatively unimportant dealer. Here it was seen by Georges Bernard, a most distinguished art critic. The following Thursday in *La Revue Gauloise*, he praised *Sisters* in the highest terms. The next morning the picture was sold.

"Now Campo is not altogether a fool. He had no less than twenty of your canvases. He took all of these to Bernard, and asked him to sponsor an exhibition. This was held two months ago, again unfortunately, at Salomon's. Every one of the pictures was sold. There remained not a single Desmonde canvas in Paris. No," he corrected himself, "I am wrong. Just after the initial excitement there came into Paris, from a grocer in Normandy, a delicious pastel of two young girls." He looked inquiringly at Stephen. "You recollect the work?"

"Perfectly. They were the Cruchot children."

"Such was the name. And the pastel, it may interest you to know, sold for no less than fifteen thousand francs."

"Good," Stephen said in a flat voice. "That would please Madame Cruchot greatly."

"Monsieur Desmonde, the collectors are demanding your work. And

you, with practically every one of your paintings in your own hands, you have cornered the market. So if you will honour me by permitting me to act for you, I can guarantee that you will have no cause to regret it."

Stephen had listened to these remarks standing against the mantel-piece. He felt faint, on the verge of a bout of coughing which would expose the extremity of his condition.

He straightened, by an effort of will. "I have neither the need nor the desire to sell my paintings."

Taken unawares by this reply, Tessier nevertheless recovered himself quickly. "Monsieur Desmonde—permit me to call you *cher maître*—you distress me. You have something of great value to give the world. You cannot bury it. Remember the parable in the Scriptures."

At the Biblical allusion coming from the shrewdest dealer in Paris, Stephen could barely repress the flicker of a smile. He said quietly: "No. If my work is good it will one day find its place. In the meantime, having lived with my paintings, I propose to die with them."

Desmonde's expression, strained yet indifferent, was strangely disconcerting. Is it pique, Tessier asked himself, because I once refused his work? No, he thought, this man is sincere. And, becoming more and more aware of the signs of illness in Stephen's face, a sudden understanding came to him.

"Monsieur Desmonde," he said, "I have no wish to importune you. I am a man of commerce, it is true. At the same time, I know beauty, and love it. This painting, which I examined with excitement and delight before you came in, is superb. And if you will allow me to have it, at the price which you name, I give you my word of honour that within three months I will donate it to the Luxembourg Museum. Come now, you see that my motives are not altogether unworthy."

Stephen shook his head.

"You must permit me the final luxury of refusing you. At the same time, I will make you a promise. You have spoken of three months. Come back then . . . come to Cable Street, in Stepney. I don't think you will be disappointed."

My God, thought Tessier, he is really ill, he is going to die, and he knows it. A shiver went over him. But he smiled and exclaimed: "I accept. And now, I have taken up too much of your time." He saw that

his visit must not be prolonged another moment. He held out his hand.

"Au revoir, cher maître"

"Good bye"

With a sudden display of emotion, Tessier kissed Stephen on both cheeks, then he went out

When the dealer had gone, Stephen allowed his cough to have its way. The spasm lasted several minutes, after which, bent double, he struggled to regain his breath. Then he leaned back against the mantel. It was in this attitude that Jenny found him as she came quietly into the room.

"Who was it, Stephen?"

"A man I once knew in Paris."

"What did he want?"

"Something he might have had a long time ago. He's coming back again, in about three months' time, to buy my pictures. You can trust him. He's not a bad sort."

She studied his face anxiously. "Oh, my dear, you are dead beat!" She put a supporting arm around him. "Let me get you into bed."

He was about to submit, then, by a superhuman effort of the will, he forced himself erect.

"I think first of all I'll finish varnishing my *Thames*." He took a step forward, put his arm round Jenny's waist and stood looking at his work. A smile barely touched his lips. "You know, he really meant it when he said it was superb."



Chapter Fifteen

ON AN April afternoon in the year 1937, an elderly clergyman and a boy descended from a bus and by way of the Thames Embankment entered the quiet precincts of Millbank.

The air, fresh yet mild, smelled deliciously of spring. In Westminster Gardens daffodils waved and tulips stood gaily at attention, upon the trim green lawns the chestnut trees, in flower, had spread a soft white carpet. The Thames shimmered in the sunshine. Against the blue, flecked by a fleece of clouds, the Abbey stood out in exquisite tracery. Beyond were the Houses of Parliament. The Rector, walking with young Stephen Desmonde, felt strangely stirred, despite the weight of

years, by the beauty of the day. The two came along the Embankment at a leisurely pace, for Bertram was slowed by rheumatism. Some fifty yards from the end of the street they crossed over and entered the Tate Gallery.

Few people were about; the long, high ceilinged rooms held that echoing quietude which pleased Bertram most. They finally sat down in a gallery, fretted by sunshine, on the west side. Upon the opposite wall were three paintings. At these, the boy as in duty bound, his elder with remote and meditative vision, gazed. Presently, without removing his eyes, Bertram spoke.

"You are settling down at Horsham? You like the school?"

"It's not at all bad, sir."

"The first year is always difficult. But you'll get into the swing of things. You've made some friends, I hope?"

"Yes, sir. There's a couple of boys that I'm chummy with."

The conversation, hauntingly reminiscent of his talks with David and the other Stephen, so many years ago, brought a strange pain to Bertram's heart.

What an old man he was getting to be, so given over to dreaming that he mixed up the present with the past and sometimes, looking at this Stephen, fancied himself in company with his own dear son. The two were certainly alike—the living Stephen had the other's open brow and deep blue eyes, the same proud set of the head upon the narrow shoulders.

"We expect fine things of you, my boy. You must do credit to your name. Are the lessons coming along?"

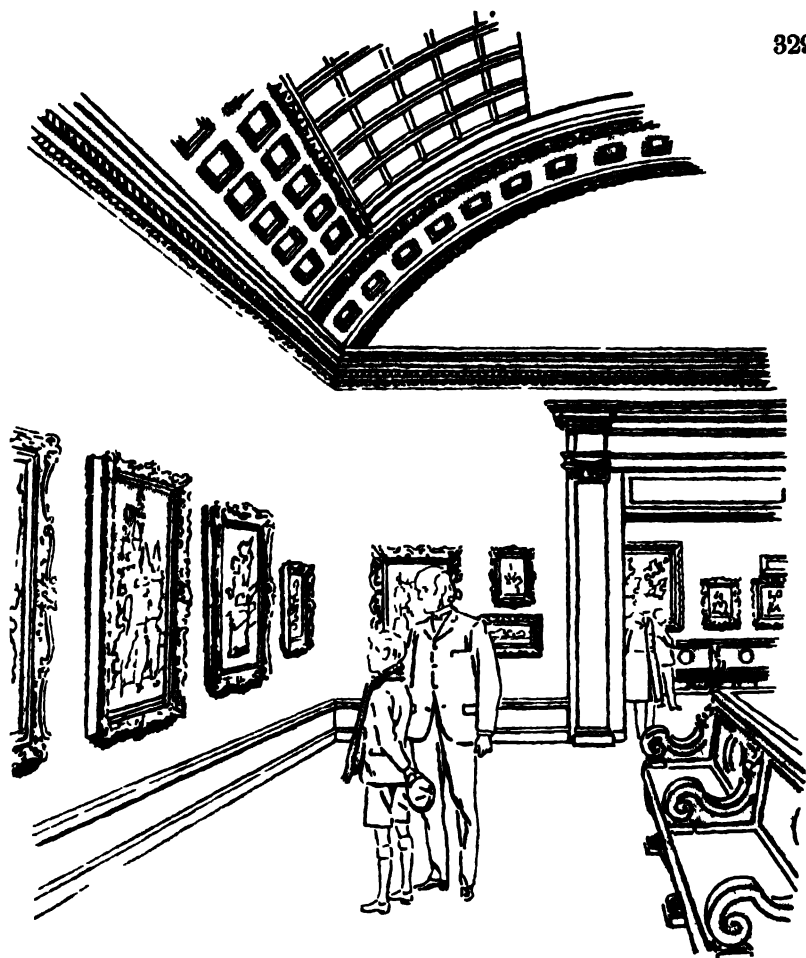
"Pretty fair, I think, sir. We had a test before the holidays. I did all right in English and arithmetic."

A shadow crossed Bertram's mind, he could scarcely bring himself to ask the question. "Do they give you drawing?"

"Yes, sir. But it seems I can't draw at all." Unconsciously, Bertram gave a little sigh of relief.

His grandson continued, "But Mother said I must tell you I got full marks for Scripture knowledge."

"Well done," Bertram murmured. Who could tell? Perhaps even now the hope of his life might be fulfilled. He laid his blue-veined fingers on the boy's hand and patted it approvingly.



Stephen rather enjoyed these not infrequent expeditions with his grandfather, but today, the beginning of the Easter holidays, after having been away from his mother for nine weeks, he was eager to see her. She would meet them at Waterloo Station, and take him home with her. He was about to inquire tactfully of Bertram what the time might be when a party of schoolgirls entered the room, under the escort of their mistress.

There were about a dozen of them, in dark-green skirts and blazers, straw hats with green ribbons. The mistress, in tweeds and flat-heeled shoes, drew up opposite Bertram and Stephen.

"And now, girls," she announced, "we come to the Desmondes, three representative paintings purchased in 1930. The first, entitled *Circus*, distinguished by marvellous colour and composition, is of the artist's early French period. Note the grouping of the clowns and the manner in which a sense of movement is given to the figure of the young woman on the bicycle.

"The second painting, *The Blue Wrapper*, which I am sure you have seen reproduced many times, is a portrait of the artist's wife. Here you will find the freedom of design which characterized all Desmonde's work. The subject is neither pretty nor young, yet an extraordinary feeling of beauty is created.

"The third, and largest, painting was the last work accomplished by the artist, and is considered his finest. It is, as you see, a composition of the estuary of the Thames, showing all the crowded turbulent movement of the river. Desmonde was a great original artist who opened up a new era of expression."

Looking round at her pupils she asked briskly: "Any questions, girls?"

One of the girls spoke up. "Is he dead, miss?"

"Yes, Doris. He died as a young man, almost unrecognized. But when we look at these works we know he did not live in vain."

When they had gone, clattering down the long gallery, Bertram, still immobile, maintained his baffled contemplation of the pictures. Stephen, his son, a great artist . . . yes, even the word genius was now being used without reserve. There was no pride in him at the thought, but rather a strange bewildered sadness, and, thinking of the pain and disappointment of a lifetime crowned too late, he wondered if it had all been worth it. What was beauty, after all, that men should martyr themselves in its pursuit, die for it, like the saints of old?

Peering hard at the canvases, he tried to discern their virtues. Regretfully, he shook his head. He could not do so. He bowed again to the opinion of the experts. The pictures remained to him as great an enigma as had been his son, in every action of his life, but most of all in the unrepentance of his end.

He could never contemplate that last scene without a dull ache in his heart. In the grey morning, summoned by Glyn to the small back bedroom in Cable Street, he had found Stephen ghostly pale and barely

breathing, speechless, but still with a pencil and a sketch-block at his bedside. Bertram had tried to speak words of affection and consolation, but, as he did so, Stephen, writing weakly, had handed him a note *Too bad I have never drawn you You have a fine head* And then, sunk in the pillows, he had begun to outline Bertram's profile on his block. A final portrait, for presently the pencil slipped from his grasp, the fingers were still Then, while Bertram sat bowed and broken, Glyn, with a hard, set competence, had begun immediately to make a death mask of the gaunt, passionless face

"For God's sake," he had cried out, "must you do that?"

"Yes," Glyn answered, 'for art's sake In the future this will be for many a source of faith and perseverance "

The fun il had been at Stillwater, and Stephen was at peace there now within the church, beside his ancestor the Crusader

With an effort Bertram roused himself 'Come, my boy You shall have an ice before we meet your mother '

WHEN they arrived at the station, there, waiting for them under the clock, was young Stephen's mother, neat and unobtrusive in her black serge costume

The boy went towards her quickly She bent a little, held him closely in her arms

Standing a little distance off, the Rector couldn't help noticing that it was a loving reunion And his son's widow she was really a modest, decent little creature, living now with her sister in the better part of Margate There was an increasing income from the sale of Stephen's pictures He felt sure the black she wore was a sign of mourning—she must have cared much more than he had believed They were coming towards him now.

"I do hope Stevie's been a good boy "

"Very good " But he wished she would not abbreviate the name.

"It's kind of you to take him out."

"And good of you to let me do so "

Jenny looked meaningly at her son, and he said :

"Thank you very much, sir, for a splendid time."

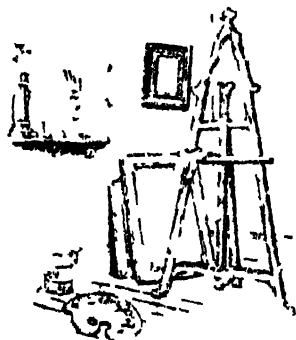
They shook hands. He saw them go off together, arm in arm. He sighed and consulted his watch. His train was due to leave in fifteen

minutes. Caroline most probably would meet him at the junction, come home with him in the bus. Since Julia's death two years ago, she seemed to worry less. And she had made him comfortable in the Little Rectory; although only a bungalow, it was most convenient, and warm in the winter.

Yes, a good soul, Carrie.

He found a third-class corner seat on the train—gone were the days of travelling first—and, when the engine started off, settled himself to read. But he suddenly felt tired. Leaning back, he closed his eyes. Was he asleep? Or listening to the pounding of the wheels, which seemed to repeat, over and over again, the name of his dead son?

Night fell, the train went rattling on, through the dark landscape of the night.



A J Cronin



It was in 1930 that Dr Archibald Joseph Cronin—a successful physician of thirty three, found time heavy on his hands during a much needed rest in the Scottish Highlands, and decided to lighten it by writing a novel. Though he had never produced a word of fiction before—the result was that resounding triumph *Hatter's Castle*. It has since been followed by such distinguished best sellers as *The Stars Look Down*, *The Citadel*, *The Keys of the Kingdom*, *The Green Years*, *Adventures in Two Worlds* and *Beyond This Place*.

Dr Cronin was born in Cardross in Scotland, studied medicine at the University of Glasgow and served, during the First World War, as a Surgeon Sub Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. After the war, having completed his interrupted studies, he practised for four years in South Wales—the scene of *The Stars Look Down* and *The Citadel*—and was then appointed by the Ministry of Mines to make a study of pulmonary diseases in British coal fields. He had later settled down to a substantial practice in London's West End when fate, and an irrepressible talent for writing, took a hand in his career.

Dr. and Mrs. Cronin, who were married in 1921 and have three sons, are now living in Switzerland.

HUNTER

Illustrations by R. F. Kuhn

HUNTER

A condensation from the book by
J. A. HUNTER



"Hunter" is published by Hamish Hamilton, London

FOR forty five years a professional big game hunter in British East Africa. J. A. Hunter has many an action packed adventure story to tell. His experiences span the years from the early part of this century, 'when great herds of beasts spread out over Kenya's green fields as though shaken out of a giant pepper-pot,' to the modern Africa of great farms and cities.

In *Hunter* he writes of tracking lions with fierce Masai spearmen, describes his adventures with a deadly rogue elephant, tells many an entertaining anecdote about his hunting clients. Here is African big game as few men know it, for Hunter's very survival has depended on his knowledge of every habit and wile of the powerful killers of bush and forest.

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Rogue Elephant

TWO NATIVES were returning to their village one evening when they saw a great black mass standing motionless in the shadows of the huts. The men shouted to scare the thing away. At once the mass left the shadows and charged them at fearful speed. Then the men saw it was a huge bull elephant.

They ran for their lives, each going in a different direction. One man was wearing a red blanket and that blanket was his death warrant, for the elephant followed him. The villagers cowering in their huts heard screams as the elephant caught the man. The great brute put one foot on his victim and pulled him to pieces with his trunk. Then he stamped the body into the ground and went away.

I was guiding two Canadian sportsmen through the Aberdare Forest in British East Africa when runners arrived from the chief of the victim's village to ask my help in killing the elephant. The natives in Kenya knew me well, for I had lived there many years as a white hunter—taking out sportsmen to shoot big game and killing dangerous animals at the request of the government. The chief sent me word that this bull was a rogue elephant that had been destroying farms and terrorizing the district for many months.

I was under contract to my two sportsmen. We had been in the bush many weeks looking for bongo, a rare antelope not easily come by. If I took time off to track down the rogue, it would lessen their chances of getting a good trophy. Still, they told me to go ahead. I started back at once with the runners, taking Saseeta, my Wakamba gun bearer who had been with me many years.

When we arrived at the village, Ngiri, the chief, told me that the natives were afraid to venture into the shambas, as their maize fields are called, and many of them would not even leave their huts although the wattle shacks would have been little protection against a rogue elephant.

The rogue moved from village to village, destroying the maize fields as he went, and unless he was killed the villagers would be in dire straits indeed.

With Saseeta, I went out to look for the body of the dead native. We picked up his tracks on the edge of the village and followed them through the bush.

Well do I know how he felt as he zigzagged and doubled, trying to throw off his pursuer, for I have often been chased by elephants. It is like running in a nightmare, for the way a bit thorns hold you back and the creepers pull at your legs while the elephant goes crashing after you like a terrier after a rat. Not a second goes by but you expect to feel that snaky trunk close about your neck.

We found what was left of the body. The elephant had carried off with him the red blanket that the man had been wearing. This was not the first time I had heard of a native dressed in red being attacked by an elephant and I believe the colour must attract them.

I was ready to start at once on the rogue's spoor but Ngiri told me to wait. The bull was sure to despoil another village that evening and runners would bring in word during the night. Then I could start out on the fresh spoor in the morning and save a day or more of hard tracking.

Ngiri was right. A few hours before dawn, a runner arrived all breathless from a village in the uplands some five miles away. The rogue had entered their shamba and destroyed the crop—the natives' little all, the fruits of their sweat and labour. When he had gorged himself, he moved away into the bush to digest his feast and sleep during the day.

In the upland village Saseeta and I picked up the bull's spoor at a trodden gap in the thorn-bush barricade around the shamba. The trail led us towards the deepest part of the great Aberdare Forest.

After the bright light of the open country, the forest seemed like a great building with a green roof and tree trunks for pillars. There was an eerie stillness about the place for the thick foliage deadened sounds. We walked noiselessly among the boles of the vast trees. I was glad there was little undergrowth. I could see twenty yards ahead; as much as one might ask or want.

I saw ahead of us a pile of pungent elephant droppings, surrounded by myriads of small forest flies. Saseeta pointed to the kernels of

undigested maize in the heap. The droppings were fresh. The bull was only a few hours ahead of us.

I had hoped to come up with the bull in this semi-open part of the forest. But he was cunning and had gone into the thicket to take his daytime rest. The tracks led us into a belt of dense bamboo, intergrowing with a tall plant like forest nettle that was anything but desirable to hunt in. Troops of Colobus and Sykes monkeys bounded away through the trees about us and I prayed the rogue wouldn't hear their startled crashing. In any case, the rotting bamboo underfoot made it impossible to walk quietly. I tried to step in the deep impressions made by the bull but his great stride dwarfed the efforts of mere man.

We came on a clearing where natives had been cutting wood. I swore to myself when I saw how the bull had shied away from the hated man smell and knocked the bamboos aside as he raced off through the grove. An elephant, it is said, has no fear of human scent at night in shambas will often grow panicky when he smells man in the jungle. So far the bull had been moving slowly, grazing as he went. Now he was trying to put as many miles as possible between him and the woodcutters' camp.

Saseeta and I looked at each other. He shrugged. It was hunting luck. Doggedly we set out on the great spoor which took us up an almost unbelievably steep slope to a high ridge. Here the tracks went through a tangle of wild briars and stinging nettles as if the rogue were determined to find the foulest cover in the whole Aberdare. The snarl was so bad we had to crawl under it on our hands and knees. Wriggling along, I suddenly came out into a place where the elephant had stopped to rest. I was most grateful to him for having moved on. Coming unexpectedly on a rogue when you are flat on your belly under a brier tangle is not pleasant.

Suddenly a distinct crackling sound came from ahead. Saseeta and I lay still. The bull was feeding in a grove of bamboo only a few feet ahead of us.

We crawled forward. Once in the bamboo, we could stand upright—a great relief. We moved towards the noises, stepping carefully on the ground already flattened by the bull's great imprints. The wind was uncertain. Cross draughts in the bamboo tossed it about in all directions. There was no way we could be sure of keeping down-wind of the elephant and the growth was so thick we could move only by staying in

his tracks. I knew we must be almost up with him but I could see little through the tall stalks of bamboo hemming us in on every side.

Saseeta stopped and pointed with his lips towards our left. I could still see nothing but I slowly raised my rifle. The crashing sounded again only a few feet away. I held my breath, waiting for a shot.

Suddenly the noises ceased. There was absolute silence. Saseeta and I stood motionless and I wished I could stop the noise of my heart. Then we heard the bamboos crack and sway as the bull turned and ran through the grove at full speed. That accursed breeze had given him our scent.

Saseeta and I looked at each other. Poor fellow, there is no profanity in his language but I was more fortunate and swore for us both. But I did so silently, for even though the elephant was now far away, we never spoke in the bush unless absolutely necessary.

The sun was beginning to drop and I knew it must be about five o'clock. We had been going since dawn through very hard country, and the elephant was now definitely alarmed. He might go for miles before he stopped. A wise man would have given up and returned to camp, but I have never been very wise, and I motioned to Saseeta that we would continue.

After an hour's tracking, light in the undergrowth was failing when Saseeta gave a low, bird-like whistle—the recognized bush signal for "attention." We stopped and listened. I could hear the bull moving through the bamboo, to our left. He was going down-wind, trying to pick up our scent. Then the sounds stopped and I knew he had paused to listen.

My chances of getting a shot at the rogue were now very slim but Saseeta and I kept on. He could not have caught our scent as yet for we didn't hear him crashing away. He was still standing there, probably testing the air with his raised trunk. If he waited a few more minutes, we would be up to him. My eyes ached from the constant strain of peering ahead through the greenish-yellow bamboo poles.

Suddenly I saw an indistinct, shadowy shape through the bamboo. I stopped dead and slowly raised my rifle. In the thick cover I could not tell head from tail. There was no gleam of white or yellow ivory to guide me. I held my breath until I nearly strangled to avoid the slightest noise and I knew Saseeta behind me was doing the same.

I wanted badly to fire but was afraid of only wounding him. If he

moved a few feet one way or the other I could tell 'where to shoot.

Then a sudden breeze swept through the bamboo. In an instant the bull got our scent and was gone.

I felt a sickly feeling. If I had fired I might have brought him down. But if I had only injured him, he might have killed us both in the thick cover or raced off with the pain of the wound driving him for miles before he stopped. A wounded elephant is a terrible creature and I never like to shoot unless I can be sure of a kill.

There was no use in going on. Evening was falling and the camp many miles away. Saseeta and I slowly toiled back over the long route. In the village, everyone was disappointed at my failure. Hardly a word was spoken. Supper was served in silence.

After I had eaten and lit my pipe, I could regard the whole business more philosophically. The failures make hunting worth while. If you won every time there would be no thrill in it. I hoped the natives whose shambas the rogue was destroying that night could view the affair equally impartially.

The next morning a heavy fog covered the forest. The grass was heavy with dew and the air was distinctly chilly. While I was drinking my hot tea, a half-naked runner rushed into camp. During the night the bull had raided a shamba three miles away and destroyed the crop.

Saseeta and I started off at once. When we reached the raided village, some of the natives volunteered to go along as guides. We picked up the bull's trail. By now, I knew every toenail in his huge feet and was beginning to hate the sight of them. We followed him as fast as we could go. The brush was open and we made fair time. But this was too good to last. By noon we entered some of the most damnable cover it has ever been my lot to hunt in. Bamboo shoots and fallen stems were woven into a virtual mat. Boles of dead trees lay across the trail, some four feet high. They were hard to climb over and worse to crawl under. Moving quietly was impossible.

We came on a spot where the bull had lain down at full length to sleep. I could see the imprint of his hide on the soft earth. This was encouraging, for if he had kept going, we would never have caught up with him. We were in a secondary growth of bamboo, the stalks barely half as high as the long poles we had struggled through the previous day, and their tufted tops made it impossible to see beyond muzzle range.



Gusts of wind began to spring up making the long bamboos clank together. We moved forward with the greatest caution as it is difficult to tell whether wind-borne noises are caused by stems or by beast. This was the last place I wanted to meet the rogue, for when an elephant charges in bamboo, he knocks down the long, springy stems in front of him and you may be pinned under them before getting a chance to shoot.

Even Saseeta, generally afraid of nothing, made an ugly grimace when I looked back as if to say, "This is a sticky business."

We paused at the fern-clad banks of a mountain stream and saw where the bull had been pulling up bracken with his tusks to get at the roots which seem to possess a medicinal quality for the great beasts. While we were checking the signs, one of our native guides darted back to say he heard a noise in the bamboo ahead of us. This might mean much or little. Saseeta and I moved forward as quietly as possible. The wind was steady now and in our favour. We moved slowly through the high stalks. Then we heard the ripping noise of bamboo being torn apart. The bull was right ahead of us. He could not hear us above the noise of his own feeding and, if the wind held, we had him.

I saw his trunk appear above the stalks and pull down a particularly succulent tip. I crept along, trying to see through the stalks ahead and at the same time watch where I put my feet. Saseeta kept behind me, constantly testing the breeze with a small forest fungi puff. When shaken, these little puff-balls give off a white powder almost like smoke and you can tell every shift of the wind by watching it. As we went deeper into the bamboo, the heavy growth cut off the breeze and the puff-ball dust hung motionless round Saseeta's head. Then I saw the bull not fifteen yards from me.

Between us was a network of bamboo poles through which I dared not shoot lest the bullet be deflected by one of the tough stems. Another

of those terrible decisions. Should I take the chance and shoot? Or should I wait a few minutes and hope the bull would shift his position slightly and give me a shoulder shot? I would have to make up my mind quickly for we were so close that our smell would permeate to him in the absence of wind.

Suddenly the bull saw us. He did not run as he had the day before. Without the slightest hesitation or warning, he spun round and charged.

Almost before I could raise my rifle he was on top of us. His great ears were folded back close to his head and his trunk was held tight against the lower part of his chest. He was screaming with rage—a series of throaty “URRS” is the nearest I can describe the sound. I aimed the right barrel for the centre of his skull, and fired. For an instant after the shot the bull seemed to hang in the air above me. Then he came down with a crash. He lay partly hidden by the bamboo, giving off high pitched cries and low, gurgling sounds. I fired the second barrel through the centre of his neck. Instantly the whole body relaxed, the hind legs stretched to their fullest. So ended the raider that had brought death and terror to Chief Ngiri’s people.

I examined the dead rogue’s carcass. The ivory was very poor. The tusks were only about forty pounds each, whereas a really good bull will carry ivory weighing three times that much. Forest vegetation seems to lack calcium, for the forest elephants never have as good tusks as the bush dwellers. When examining the tusks, I found an old bullet hole at the base of the right-hand tusk. With my knife I dug out a musket bullet, probably fired by an ivory hunter years before. The bullet was embedded in the nerve centre of the tusk and the pain must have been terrible. The constant suffering had driven the old bull mad and that was why he had become a rogue.

In my experience, an elephant never becomes a rogue unless he has been injured in some fashion, usually by a hunter’s bullet or by a native’s arrow. I know of only one exception to this rule and that elephant was what might be termed “club-footed.” This deformity probably explained why he was shunned by his own kind and forced to forage alone.

Back in camp, a great welcome was given Saseeta and me. Even the old and sick tottered out of their huts to thank us. The white man had not failed them. I sent word to Chief Ngiri that the raider was dead and then sat down to a well-earned supper.

OLD-TIME HUNTERS, wondering why so little ivory is ever picked up in the forest, explained it by inventing the myth of an "elephant graveyard," a mysterious hidden spot where all elephants go when they know that they are about to die. Actually, there is no such place. Undoubtedly porcupines are one of the reasons for the lack of "found" ivory. There must be some quality in the ivory that attracts them, for I have known two of them to reduce a ninety-pound tusk to a five-pound nub. I have often found the skeletons of dead elephants in the jungle. But the bones do not last long, being soon destroyed by boring beetles and the occasional brush fires that quickly reduce dry bones to ashes.

That evening, sitting in front of my campfire and smoking my pipe, I thought back over the many years I'd spent in Africa as a hunter. When I first came to Kenya, the game covered the plains as far as a man could see. I hunted lions where towns now stand, and shot elephants from the engine of the first railway to cross the country. In the span of one man's lifetime, I have seen jungle turn into farmland and cannibal tribes become factory workers. I have had a little to do with this change myself, for the government employed me to clear dangerous beasts out of areas that were being opened to cultivation. I hold a world's record for rhino, possibly another record for lion (although we kept no exact record of the numbers shot in those early days) and I have shot more than fourteen hundred elephant. I certainly do not tell of these records with pride. The work had to be done and I happened to be the man who did it. But strange as it may seem to the armchair conservationist, I have a deep affection for the animals I had to kill. I spent long years studying their habits, not only in order to kill them, but because I was honestly interested in them.

Yet it is true I have always been a sportsman. Fire-arms have been my ruling passion in life and I would rather hear the crack of a rifle or the bang of a shotgun than listen to the finest orchestra. I cannot say that I did not enjoy hunting, but looking back I truly believe that in many cases the big game had as much chance to kill me as I had to kill them.

Scotland—John Hunter

I WAS BORN near Shearington in the south of Scotland, thirteen years before the close of the last century. There was a tradition in the family that our name "Hunter" was derived from the profession of a remote ancestor, and certainly the love of hunting ran in our veins. But what was merely recreation to the rest of my family was the very breath of life to me. When I was little more than a baby I used to toddle after my father to pick up his cartridge cases after he fired and sniff the odour of gunpowder that clung to them.

When I grew older I spent all my days in the great Lochar Moss, a vast bog full of game, duck and colonies of black-headed gulls that nested so thickly on the ground that you could hardly move without stepping on their eggs. By long experience I learned the pathways through the swamp and often while wandering there I would flush the red grouse from her clutch of eggs and the mallard from her dozen. I returned from these jaunts with my clothes in a sad state, for the thousands of circling birds would paint me with their droppings, and often I would sink up to my armpits in the mossy slime. My poor mother was driven to distraction, but I loved every moment of it and even today I could retrace, blindfold, that network of paths through the great bog.

When I was eight, I borrowed Father's gun while he was out one day and went shooting with it. This gun was an old Purdey and to my mind the Purdey shotgun is the finest fire-arm ever made by man. Father got his Purdey second-hand from a friend who got it in turn from another man, and heaven only knows how many shots had been fired from it. But in spite of all that shooting, the breech action was still as tight as the day it left the shop and the gun's balance was a thing to delight the heart. The first day I took the gun out, I nearly shot off my foot with it. I was stalking partridge and in my excitement I happened to squeeze the trigger. When Father heard what had happened, he was very put out but he did not forbid me the gun. Soon I learned to handle the lovely instrument correctly and spent every night in my room cleaning and oiling it until the barrels shone like dull silver and the old engraving on the breech was nearly rubbed away by so much polishing.

With the Purdey, I shot grey-lag, pink-foot and barnacle geese along

the flats. I learned to stalk a flock of fowl while they were noisily guzzling the small mussels which were abundant in the wet sand and then stand stock still when the sound stopped and I knew the fowl were raising their heads to look about. At night I would lie in bed and listen to the cackling of wild geese overhead as they battled against the gale, and the sound was sweeter to me than the music of bagpipes. Then I would fall asleep dreaming of the morrow and the long tramps through the marshes.

Nor did I neglect my fishing. Many a day I spent whipping the waters of the Lochar stream with a split cane rod, and like as not I would be back that night with a torch and spear, for the salmon were dazed by the light and, if you were quick, you could harpoon one with a fast thrust. It was tricky work, for the spear seems to bend as it enters the water and you must allow for what is known as "the angle of refraction."

As I grew older, some of the country folk introduced me to an ancient and honourable sport which has no better name given to it than poaching, yet it is a fine business requiring the greatest of skill. There were some noble poachers in the south of Scotland but I think I can say there was none my equal, for I spent every hour that was not given over to my Purdey and fishing rod learning how to set a snare or run a net. Many's the dark night I crawled through cover, my fine silk net twisted round my neck like a scarf, listening for the sound of the keeper's foot-falls on the frosty ground. The keepers carried guns and were not slow to use them, putting the life of a pheasant or a rabbit higher than that of a man. But this only made the sport more exciting and I often think the practice I got as a lad dodging keepers stood me in good stead years later when I came to stalk big game. I worked with my lurcher, a very knowing dog of a breed originally developed by the gypsies for their poaching work. The dog warned me when the keepers were about and once he and I lay on our bellies while two keepers stood ten feet away and wondered together where I was hiding. Those were good days and I often think I got as much of a thrill bagging a rabbit behind the keeper's back as I did later bringing down a bull elephant with two hundred pounds of ivory in his tusks.

My parents had always taken for granted that I would follow in my father's footsteps and become a farmer. Now I had little love for anything save hunting, yet I considered farming better than being cooped

up in an office, so I said nothing. But when I was eighteen I became seriously infatuated with an older woman, and my family decided it would be nice if I took a trip somewhere—say to Africa. It was arranged that I should go to stay with a distant relation of ours who had a farm in Kenya, near Nairobi.

"This trip will either make or break you, John," my father said. "You will have nothing of our dull ways and want adventure. Very well, lad, here is your adventure. It will be hard in Africa but if you come back with your tail between your legs, never let me hear more of your fine talk. You will have been beaten, my lad, and from then on you must settle down to an honest job and work at it as other folks do."

A few weeks later I embarked for the east coast of Africa. I had the *Purdey* which my father had given me (I knew then that he had forgiven me my sins) and a .275 Mauser rifle, a great, heavy thing that an uncle of mine had brought back from the Boer War. After a long voyage I reached Mombasa. To a raw Scottish lad like myself, it was like being picked up and set down in the middle of the *Arabian Nights*. For the first time in my life I saw palm trees growing, walked through native bazaars with leopard hides hanging up for sale and watched half-naked savages coming in from the jungles of the interior. In the bay, Arab dhows were setting sail across the Indian Ocean to Bombay.

I boarded the train for Nairobi in the evening. For the first part of the trip we travelled through tropical jungles, but when I awoke the next morning, the train had reached the uplands. On every side were great open plains, dotted with herds of wild game. A hunter's dream come true. I went nearly mad with excitement watching the strange beasts raise their heads calmly to watch the train go by.

I arrived about noon at Nairobi—in those days largely a city of shacks. I stood on the station platform, listening to the other passengers call to the native porters in Swahili, the common tongue of East Africa. I felt very lonely. My cousin was supposed to meet me there and I longed to see him. Then along the platform came striding a huge giant of a man, his hair sprouting in every direction, and a dirty beard hanging down from his chin. He carried two great revolvers strapped to his sides in the manner of an American cowboy and a knife stuck through his belt. As I stared at this man, he walked up to me and bellowed, "Are you John Hunter?"

"I am," said I, regretfully.

"I'm your cousin," he said with an oath. I was to learn he seldom spoke without cursing. "Get in the rig."

We drove to his ranch some twenty miles away. My cousin talked and swore the whole way, drinking from a bottle of rum he had on the seat beside him. The man's talk brought the sweat out over me. He had been the skipper of a windjammer that operated along the African coast and, judging from what he said, the ship was little better than a pirate. He told me fearful stories of keel-hauling and flogging. I was soon to see that he was as brutal as his words.

I stayed on the plantation for three months. The place was in a miserable state of neglect. I knew enough of farming to realize that everything was being done wrong. My cousin was not a farmer and why he had taken it up was beyond me unless he was afraid to show his face along the sea coast. His constant brutality was sickening. He kicked and struck his native boys seemingly for the pleasure of it, and when the time came to bring in the cows, he beat the poor creatures with a rawhide whip until they screamed like humans in their agony.

I held on as long as I could, remembering what my father had said about coming back with my tail between my legs. But at last flesh and blood could endure it no longer. I packed my few belongings and, getting a ride from a friendly farmer, returned to Nairobi.

What little money I had was in the Bank of India and there I went to get enough for my return passage. When the man behind the grille heard the Scottish burr in my voice, he looked at me curiously and asked, "What part of Scotland do you come from, lad?" There was a bit of a burr in his voice, too.

"Shearington, seven miles from Dumfries," I told him.

"Why, you must know my brother, Major Cruickshanks of the Ayrshire Imperial Yeomanry."

Now it so happened I had been a trooper in the Ayrshire, and Major Cruickshanks was my officer. He and I were good friends.

When the banker heard that, there was nothing for it but I must sit down with him and tell my adventures. When he heard that I was beaten and ready to go home, he would have none of it.

"A Scotsman is never licked, lad," he told me. "We'll have no more of that talk. I have a friend on the railway and he'll give you a position



as guard. That will tide you over until you find something more to your liking."

I soon found that as a railway guard, I had a fine opportunity for shooting. Often we would see a lion on his kill beside the tracks and in the early morning and evening we were as likely as not to pass a leopard. I carried my old Mauser in the chop box where we kept our food and whenever we passed a likely-looking specimen, I would lean out of the train window and bag him. Then I'd pull the Westinghouse brake to stop the train, jump out with a native boy and skin the beast. People were in no great hurry in those days and the engineer was a good sport. He would toot the whistle when there was game about.

One day the engineer gave off a volley of toots. I looked out of the

window and saw my first herd of elephants grazing in the brush near the tracks. I had never seen an elephant before but I grabbed my rifle and jumped off the train. The engineer hurried over. "I only meant you to look at them, not try to shoot one," he said. "Suppose they come for us?"

"Never fear, we'll knock them over like rabbits," I promised him.

Together we stole up on the herd. I had enough sense to stalk them from down wind and they had no idea what we were about. As we came up with them, the herd began to move with their grazing and drifted between us and the train. The engineer begged me not to shoot. "We'll be caught in the middle of a stampede. Let's get out of here," he pleaded.

I was not leaving there without a shot. I did not realize that there are only a few places on an elephant where a .275 will penetrate, so I aimed for the shoulder of a bull carrying a nice pair of tusks, and squeezed the trigger.

The next instant hell broke loose. Elephants were running in all directions, trumpeting and screaming. The ground shook under us and some of them passed so close it seemed as though I could have touched them with a fishing rod. When the dust had settled, I found the engineer down on his knees praying. My bull had not dropped and I asked the man to help me spoor him. "If God in His infinite grace ever lets me get back to my engine, I'll never leave the train again," was all the man said. But my shot had told better than I thought. On our way back from Mombasa the next day I saw the dead bull lying not far from the tracks. I stopped the train and collected the tusks. I got thirty-seven pounds for them, which was more than I made in two months as a guard.

For the first time I realized that it was possible for a man to make his living as a hunter—and a very good living, too.

Professional Hunter

I BEGAN my career as a professional hunter by shooting lions for their hides. Lion hides sold for a pound each in Mombasa and leopard skins for nearly as much. At that time, there were plenty of lions round

the Tsavo area, some two hundred miles south-east of Nairobi. Lions were regarded as vermin, for they killed cattle and some were not averse to picking up stray natives. In fact, a few years before, during the building of the railway, lions killed so many of the Indian coolies working on the tracks that construction of the line had to be stopped until the man-eaters were hunted down and shot.

It has always been my belief that the coolies themselves virtually trained these animals to become man-eaters. The railway company used to pay good sums to coolies who would volunteer to bury any of their comrades who died during the construction of the line. To save themselves trouble, these burial gangs would simply leave the corpses out in the bush to be eaten by the hyenas and lions. Lions are great scavengers and developed a liking for human flesh that made them a nuisance for many years.

Lion hunting was a dangerous business. There were about forty professional lion hunters in the Nairobi area and at least half of them had been badly mauled at some time or other. Knowing nothing about these great cats, I set out with my old Mauser and a single native boy to make my mark as a famous lion hunter.

To hunt lions, you must understand how they think and behave. A man can understand dogs with fair ease, for dogs think much as humans do. But a lion is a cat and cats are temperamental creatures and highly subject to moods. Weather has a profound effect on them. Rainy weather makes them nervous, energetic and keen. Very dry weather tends to make them lazy and indifferent. Lions hunt mainly at night. Darkness seems to act on them as a stimulant. The darker the night, the more likely lions are to be about. I never heard of a lion making a kill during the full moon. There are many cases of men meeting lions in the bush and scaring the animals off by shouting at them, yet I have also seen a lion charge a lorry and nearly knock it over in his attempts to get at the men inside.

Lions are fairly sociable animals and like to collect in groups. They do not take the keen pleasure in companionship that dogs do, but a lion likes to feel that he's not all alone. A group of lions is called a "pride," an old mediæval term. I have seen as many as eighteen lions in a pride, ranging from the grand old male down to the newborn cubs playing with their mothers' tails. Lions are polygamous and, as each lioness

comes into season, the lion will retire with her for a few days and then rejoin the pride. There may be several males in a pride, each with his own harem, but there is generally one head male and the others defer to him.

Although it would not be true to say that they hunt in packs, yet there is a certain organization about their work. The actual killing is frequently done by the lionesses or by young, active males. The old patriarch often holds back, directing the business and only throwing in his own weight and strength when necessary. A pride of lions on the hunt communicate with each other by deep grunts that have a strangely ventriloquial quality. It is almost impossible to tell where the noise comes from. Lions very seldom roar; I have heard the true roar only a few times in my life. They must have an amazing ability to see during the darkest night for I believe they hunt by sight rather than smell. They count on stampeding the game by their hunting grunts and sending it towards a spot where the other lions are waiting. Of course, if they can see their quarry, they will stalk and leap upon it much as any cat does.

A pride of lions does not kill every night. After a kill, the lions gorge themselves. Then they return to the carcass the next night to finish it off. Often they will lie up the following night to digest their food and rest. The third night, they will kill again.

There was little trouble about finding lions near Tsavo. The local natives were only too glad to help me out. During the rainy season, lions were apt to leave their usual range and wander great distances. At such times, they usually went alone rather than in prides. Often a lion would find himself in a district where there was no game. Then he would be forced to turn to the natives' cattle for food. The natives keep their cattle penned up in thornbush kraals at night and lions generally dislike entering these enclosures. But they have an ingenious system of making the cattle come to them. The lion moves up-wind of the kraal and gives his scent to the terrified cattle. If they do not stampede immediately, the lion deliberately urinates on the ground. The strong odour of the urine is enough to drive the cattle frantic with terror. They stampede out of the kraal and scatter into the bush where the lion can kill them at his leisure.

When a native sent word that a lion had killed some of his cattle, my

boy and I would start spooring the cat from the site of the kill. On the sandy soil of the bush country, spooring is fairly easy. The lion would generally be lying up for the day in a patch of thick brush not too far away. We could tell by his angry growls when we were getting close to him. Then my boy would throw stones into the bush while the growls rose in pitch and fury. Finally the lion would charge us, moving so fast that a man often had time for only one shot.

There are few sights in nature more terrible than that of a charging lion. He comes at a speed close to forty miles per hour, hitting top pace the instant he takes off. If a stalking lion can get to within fifty yards of an antelope, the antelope is doomed, for in spite of his great speed the lion will overtake him within a dozen bounds. A man standing only thirty yards or so from a charging lion cannot afford to miss. A full-grown lion weighs some four hundred and fifty pounds and, if he reaches you with the full force of his charge, he will knock you down as easily as a man overturns a mushroom with his foot.

I would stand with my rifle held ready while my boy was throwing stones to provoke the charge. When the charge came, I'd throw my rifle to my shoulder and fire instantly at the tawny shape that seemed to move with the speed of a shell. I have often thought that my early training with a shotgun, firing at waterfowl as they flashed across the Lochar Moss, was of great benefit to me in this type of hunting.

If a man trusts himself and his gun, he can hunt lions under these conditions with no very great danger. You must have some companion on these trips because you need two men to skin a lion. After several months we managed to reduce lion hunting to something of a system.

My boy and I would take the train to one of the small stations along the line and start out into the bush with no equipment but my rifle, cartridges, a skinning knife and a water flask. We would strike out through the bush until we came on a donga. Dongas are shallow ravines, usually filled with high grass and weeds which provide excellent cover. Lions often lie up in dongas during the heat of the day. I would take my stand on one side of a donga and my boy would walk along the other, throwing stones into the cover. If we heard any growls, he would continue his stone throwing until he flushed a lion. After shooting a lion, we would draw him and hang him by the hind legs to a tree limb before going on after another. I never killed more than four lions

on one trip, for the green skins weighed forty pounds each and two of them were a good load for a man to pack out of the bush.

The main trouble with this type of hunting was that I never knew how many lions would bolt out of the cover when the boy started throwing stones. Once I was walking along the edge of a donga when I heard a sleeping lion snoring away in the high grass. I tossed in a stone to flush him. Instead of one lion, two came charging out straight at me. There was no time to think. I fired at one and saw him drop. The other gave a great leap and passed right over my head, knocking off my hat as he went.

These lions were not making a proper charge. The stone had frightened them and they were merely trying to escape. I just happened to be in their way.

After several months of this work, I began to fancy myself as a bush craftsman. Like many another young lad, I became over-confident. In my opinion, every hunter goes through three stages. At first, he is nervous and unsure of himself. Then, as he masters the rudiments of bush craft, he becomes cocky and feels that nothing can hurt him. Later, he learns what risks he must be prepared to take and which are nothing but plain foolishness. I was now in the second stage. I nearly lost my life learning the third lesson.

For some time I had been hunting with my native boy in the bush around Tsavo. Some seven miles from Tsavo was Kyulu Hill, where a blasting crew had set up camp to collect rock for the railway road-bed. Between the two places was a stretch of wild bush, completely uncrossed by trails or roads, and reputed to be very rich in lion. I decided to set out from Tsavo and walk to the hill, cutting through the bush and doing some shooting as I went.

Seven miles seemed an easy distance and I set out early in the morning, expecting to reach Kyulu by noon. I had no compass and did not even bother to take along a box of matches or a water bottle. I took my Mauser and a pocketful of ammunition. That was all. My native boy had gone to visit some relations of his so I was alone.

For a few miles all went well. The thick, umbrella-like thorn trees completely shut off the sun, but that made walking cooler. There were plenty of rhino signs about and some lion. I was going along fine when I saw a line of footprints ahead of me. "Hello," I said to myself.



"What's this?" for I was sure there was no one else in the bush. I stopped to examine them and found that they were my own. I was circling.

At the sight of those footprints I lost all confidence in myself. That may sound like a small thing, but I tell you that when a man is alone in the bush with no one but himself to depend on, it is a terrible sensation. I felt panic for the first time in my life. I suddenly realized how much I had depended on my native boy, for natives seem to have compasses inside their heads and never get lost.

I sat down and tried to think. Then I made several attempts to climb trees and see the sun but no one could force his way up through the four-inch thorns. I thought of backtracking myself to Tsavo but that would take many hours and I had no wish to spend the night in the bush. I decided to press on and run my chances of reaching Kyulu.

When night fell, I was still lost in the bush. I did not dare to stop for I was afraid that without water I would not survive another day in the barren bush. I struggled on. Rhino, suddenly flushed from the cover, went by me like express trains. When dawn broke I was nearly dropping from exhaustion but saw no signs of coming to the end of the bush. A few hours later, I came across my footprints again. I was completely

lost, and there was no use trying to backtrack myself for I would be dead before I untangled the trail. I went on and on through the endless bush. Occasionally I came upon a rhino standing under a thorn tree. If he ran off, well and good. If he charged, I shot him, for I was too weak to run or dodge. I left them lying dead, caring nothing for the horns or hides although rhino horn was worth more than ivory, pound for pound.

Night fell again and I was still in the bush. I wandered about in a delirium, firing my rifle at anything I saw or fancied I saw in the darkness. When daylight came again I was out of my head. I would have died that day if I had not stumbled upon a rhino watering hole, a foul mass of ooze and mud and pitted by holes made by their great feet. I fell into it and drank until I could drink no more.

After I had lain in the hole a couple of hours I felt better and kept on. But by evening I was as badly off as before. That night was another torture. By morning I was desperate from lack of food and mad with thirst. I was beginning to go out of my head again as I reeled on through the never-ending bush. Then I saw something shimmering through the bush like silver heat waves. At first I paid no attention. As I got closer, I stopped and forced my eyes to focus on the things. They were the telegraph wires that ran from the railway to Kyulu. I fought my way through the bush towards them, still fearful it was only delirium. When I reached the telegraph poles I fell sobbing to my knees. I was saved. I had only to follow the line a short distance to reach Kyulu.

While I was recovering from the effects of this trip in Nairobi I was asked to many dances. At one of these I met a Miss Hilda Banbury whose father owned a fine music shop in Nairobi. Hilda seemed to me the prettiest, gentlest girl I had ever laid eyes on. She seemed to like me, too, but no one could have been more surprised than I when I asked her to be Mrs. Hunter and she said yes.

With the responsibility of this lovely young girl on me, I determined to turn over a new leaf and give up the risks and uncertainties of professional hunting. A relative in Scotland had died, leaving me a little money. Nairobi had begun to grow rapidly and there was a great demand for goods. I invested my capital in mules, horses and wagons and started hauling freight for the settlers. But I am a poor businessman and, although I worked hard, in a year I was bankrupt and had lost every penny I'd put into the venture.

I told Hilda the bad news. She took it very calmly, although there was a child on the way.

"Why, John, I've been waiting for you to lose that money," she told me cheerfully. "You were never meant for business. Now you can do what you always wanted to do in the first place, you can be a white hunter." (In Africa this term distinguished the white professional from the sportsman or the native hunter.)

With faith like that, what can a man do?

I went to see my friend, Leslie Simpson, an American white hunter, reputed to be the greatest lion killer of his day, for in one year he had dispatched as many as three hundred and sixty-five lions. When Leslie heard that I wanted to guide parties and needed a job at once, he rubbed his chin.

"Two American sportsmen have just arrived in town. They want to take a safari across the Serengeti Plains," he told me. "There's a great extinct volcano in the heart of that country called Ngorongoro.



RHINO horns are worth thirty shillings a pound or more—ten shillings more than the finest grade of ivory. These horns are sold for a curious purpose. Orientals consider them a powerful aphrodisiac and there is an unlimited demand for them in India and Arabia.

I once tried some of the horn myself to test its powers. I closely followed a recipe given me by an Indian trader: take about one

square inch of rhino horn, file it into a powder form, put it into a muslin bag like a tea bag, and boil it in a cup of water until the water turns dark brown. I took several doses of the concoction but regret to report I felt no effects. It is possible that a man in the bush, surrounded by nothing but rhinos and native scouts, does not receive the proper inspiration to make the dose effective.

According to the account, there is more game in that crater than any man has ever seen before. As far as I know, no regular safari has ever crossed the Serengeti although a few ivory hunters have been there, and a strange man by the name of Captain Hurst is said to have a home in the crater. I told these Americans I didn't know of any man who would care to take them through, but if you want the job, it's yours."

I did not know what lay ahead. I only knew that the great white hunters of the period—men like Leslie—were, to my mind, the most colourful group of men alive. I longed to be like them.

I thanked Leslie and hurried home to tell Hilda I was starting on my career as a white hunter and guide.

Serengeti Safari

THE FOLLOWING DAY I met my two American clients at their hotel. They were big, hearty chaps, very keen to make the Ngorongoro trip. "Captain, we want you to take us into fresh territory that hasn't been all shot out," one of them explained. "What we want is trophies and we don't mind roughing it some to go where the high class stuff is." I explained to them frankly I knew nothing about the place but that according to rumour the crater was the finest game country in Africa.

I was pleased with their enthusiasm but I knew well the difficulties of taking a safari across the great Serengeti Plains during the dry season. The plains are a vast, semi desert country extending for hundreds of miles across southern Kenya and I had no notion where the water holes were or what game we would find as food for our native porters. I cautioned my clients that the trek would be hard and possibly dangerous but my warnings only served to make them more eager. I went to Leslie Simpson for advice and he came up with the name of Fourrie, an old time Dutch hunter who knew the country and might act as our guide.

Fourrie turned out to be a lean, shrewd-eyed man, old enough to be my grandfather. Early in life, a rhino had taken him unexpectedly from behind and so lacerated his thigh muscles that he walked with a limp. Like many of the old ivory hunters, he had made and lost several fortunes—always sinking the money he made from a successful trip into a still bigger safari. As long as his luck held, the returns from these

expeditions continued to grow but a few unsuccessful trips had wiped out all his profits. Fourrie had then taken to cattle running—driving herds past the government guards into districts where they could be sold for a high price. In spite of the old fellow's shaky morals, he was one of the finest bush-craftsmen I have ever seen. Down on his luck, he was glad to guide us to the crater for a few pounds.

We fitted out in Arusha, two hundred miles south of Nairobi en route to the Serengeti Plains. Our first consideration was porters. The only men available were the Wa-Arusha tribesmen, a miserable lot, lazy and cantankerous. They are an agricultural people, the women doing all the work while the men amuse themselves drinking and painting their bodies in weird designs with burnt bone and red clay. Fortunately, Leslie Simpson had loaned me one of his men to act as our head boy. This fellow's name was Andolo and he was the best field taxidermist in Africa, having been trained in the business some years before by an expedition sent out by the American Museum of Natural History in New York. I knew Andolo would be a great help in preserving our trophies and would also act as a top sergeant to keep the unruly porters in order.

The modern white hunter can hardly realize the trouble and difficulties inherent in the old-fashioned foot safari. Today, safaris are made by heavy-duty lorries. Riding comfortably in one of these powerful machines, you can cover a hundred miles a day in comparative comfort

while twenty miles a day was a long, hard grind on foot. Best of all, a lorry is not temperamental. Unlike a porter, a lorry will not suddenly desert you because it becomes homesick for its wife or because the going is too hard. Unless you have had to endure the emotional outbreaks of several dozen porters, you can hardly appreciate the sterling qualities of a lorry.

Our safari consisted of a hundred and fifty porters. Everything we needed for the three months' trip

BUFFALO



would have to be carried on their heads. Nearly a third of them would be carrying food for the others. Even so, we would have to stop continually to shoot game to eke out our supplies, and this takes time and slows up the march. Also, you may find yourself in country where there is little or no game. Only a small amount of water could be carried and so we depended on finding water holes.

All the equipment had to be broken down into sixty-pound loads, the recognized weight for a porter to carry on his head. For food, I leaned heavily on tinned goods, which are very convenient although heavy. In addition to our tents, camp beds, mosquito nettings, cooking utensils, guns and ammunition, we took along several hundred pounds of salt for preserving the trophies.

Before we left Arusha, Fourrie suggested that we give the porters a big feast to put them in a good mood. As the Wa-Arusha have few cattle and are poor hunters, they seldom taste meat. As a result, they have a passion for it. We purchased a fat bullock and the porters prepared for a banquet. They invited all their friends and relatives.

Hours before the meal was due to begin, long streams of natives came pouring into our camp from all directions. Waiting for the distribution of the meat, they worked themselves into a noisy gabble that sounded like the chatter of monkeys. As they grew gayer, they hurled all kinds of abusive epithets at each other, ceaselessly and at a speed well-nigh incredible. Every sally was greeted by bursts of uncontrolled laughter, the younger girls rolling on the ground with delight.

One of the Americans said to me, "I don't figure we'll have any trouble with these good-natured guys." I felt the same way but Fourrie seemed more doubtful. The next morning his misgivings were amply justified. The cool, early morning hours are the best time to travel but long after sun-up our Wa-Arusha porters were still sitting round their campfires leisurely eating breakfast. Andolo, our head boy, became so angry he went round kicking over the porters' kettles to make them hurry. Instantly the Wa-Arusha went wild with rage. Some of the men fell to the ground, chewing grass in their fury. The rest grabbed their knives and went for Andolo. Fourrie and I had to hold them off with our rifles. Andolo was so frightened that he wanted to return to Nairobi at once and I had trouble persuading him to stay.

After this inauspicious beginning, we slowly got started. The long

line of sullen porters stretched out for half a mile. We had been lucky enough to get a few donkeys to carry the heavier loads and these patient beasts were a great help.

Our first march was only a few miles so as to condition the porters for the long trek ahead. Also, during the first day or so of a safari there are innumerable unforeseen quarrels and difficulties that make it impossible to move at any speed. In the night, some of the porters deserted. You must always count on losing a few men while you are still close to their native village. Fourrie and I had allowed for this and had hired enough porters so that we could afford to let the missing men go. As we went deeper towards the Serengeti, our porters settled down into some semblance of order.

I wish people who write of Africa as though the whole land were a tropical glade with shady trees and purling streams could have been with us on that bare, waterless waste. The country was nothing but unbroken, flat plains constantly fanned by strong currents of hot wind. There was no shade. Our sweat soaked through our clothes and then dried almost instantly in the intense heat, leaving deposits of salt over our khaki jumpers. On rare occasions when we came on pools of stagnant water the foul stuff seemed to taste of various horrible smells. In the evening, we pitched camp wherever we happened to stop and fell asleep listening to the hot wind howling over that miserable tract of desolation.

Occasionally during the day the wind stopped and we would see that strange phenomenon of the desert, the mirage. Then the heat waves would begin to gather. They appeared to race across the barren ground like an endless waving chain. Beyond them, the veld would slowly turn to a watery plain before our eyes. I thought what a death-trap this would be for a man lost on the desert as I had once been lost in the Tsavo bush. The poor fellow would stagger on and on in pursuit of that great lake of cool, fresh water which would constantly keep receding before him. The illusion of water was perfect, except that an animal would occasionally walk through the reflection. In the mirage light, small beasts like jackals were greatly exaggerated in size and the scrawniest gazelle seemed to carry record horns.

My two clients actually seemed to enjoy the hardships of this long trek. They trudged on day after day, cracking jokes with each other or me, and when we happened to find some Grant gazelles with good

horns, they were delighted. These Grants were our first trophies and I was glad my clients were so pleased with them. Although the gazelles were as good as any I'd seen, Fourrie merely looked at them and smiled. "Wait until we reach the crater," was all he said.

We had travelled over a hundred miles and Ngorongoro was still not in sight. The country seemed to be growing worse. I began to be concerned.

One afternoon while we were plodding across the seemingly endless waste, Fourrie stopped and pointed ahead. I could hardly believe my eyes. Across the dirty brown of the desert was a splash of the purest emerald, as though a giant with a green paintbrush had dabbed the spot.

"N'garuka Springs," said Fourrie. "Fresh water and fig trees. We'll camp under the shade."

Our exhausted porters, who had been on the point of revolt, shouted with delight when they saw the oasis ahead. Our donkeys winded the water and galloped forward so desperately we were hard put to hold them. The whole safari broke into a clumsy trot as we neared the trees. When we reached the shade, the intense heat of the sun was cut off and the air was delightfully cool. A clear stream ran beneath the tall boles, sparkling in the dappled shade. We drank and washed our hot faces in the stream and then lay on the banks, watching the precious stuff. Just to see and touch it was pure delight.

Hundreds of green pigeons were feeding on the figs and our sportsmen put in an hour of shooting while the boys pitched camp. Later, I found a herd of hippo in the stream although the water was so shallow it scarcely covered their broad backs. How the animals got there I have no idea. I shot one as meat for the porters. In an incredibly short space of time there was scarcely a vestige of flesh left.

We camped for ten days by the stream, resting and repairing minor damage caused by the trek, before pushing on for Ngorongoro crater.

After some hard trekking, we saw ahead of us the tall, tree-covered slopes of the great extinct volcano. Ngorongoro rises nine thousand feet from the plains and the top was draped in mists. By evening we reached the foot of the great south wall of the volcano and camped there beside a little stream. We were in a tropical fairyland, surrounded by huge trees that formed a roof of branches above our heads. Brilliantly coloured birds flitted between the great trunks. I remember especially the lovely

plantain eaters with their dark blue bodies and crimson wings. Bands of monkeys swung through the branches overhead, chattering at us. There were plenty of elephant and rhino spoor about and also many lion signs.

At dawn the next morning, we started the ascent of the crater. We followed the game trails, for animals are excellent surveyors and their paths are cleverly engineered to give the easiest climb. It was late afternoon before we reached the lip of the old volcano.

Every man in our party stopped dead as he arrived at the top and looked down on the vast crater, stretching away fifteen miles to the far edge of the encircling lip. All the tales I had heard of Ngorongoro were as nothing compared to the great herds spread out over those green fields as though shaken out of a giant pepper pot. The crater seethed with game. The grass was cropped as fine as a lawn by the thousands of beasts. In the distance the herds seemed to melt together into a trembling mass of white and fawn. There were zebra, eland, giraffe, topi, waterbuck, reedbuck, bushbuck, steinbok, Thomson gazelles, Grant gazelles, impala, wildebeest, duiker, oribi and ostrich. This was how all the African veld must have looked before the coming of the white man. Here in this isolated crater was the last great stronghold of game.

My two clients, wildly enthusiastic at the abundance of game, became determined to bag a world's record trophy. I must confess that I became sick of the sight of Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game* on the breakfast table every morning.

Impala were particularly fine in the crater and we spent days studying the beasts through a pair of binoculars, searching for a record head. At last we located a fine animal with horns that looked to be well over thirty inches long. Beside him was standing another first-rate buck but slightly smaller. One client took careful aim and fired but, alas, it was the smaller antelope that fell. Here was a tragedy. We measured the long, curving horns in every way possible but twenty-eight inches was the best we could make out of them—an excellent trophy but still short of the record. To me, it was sportsman's luck and nothing could be done about it. But my clients were more determined. When we got back to camp, they approached me with a proposition.

"Hey, captain, you can steam a gunstock to alter bend and cast, can't you?" I admitted it.

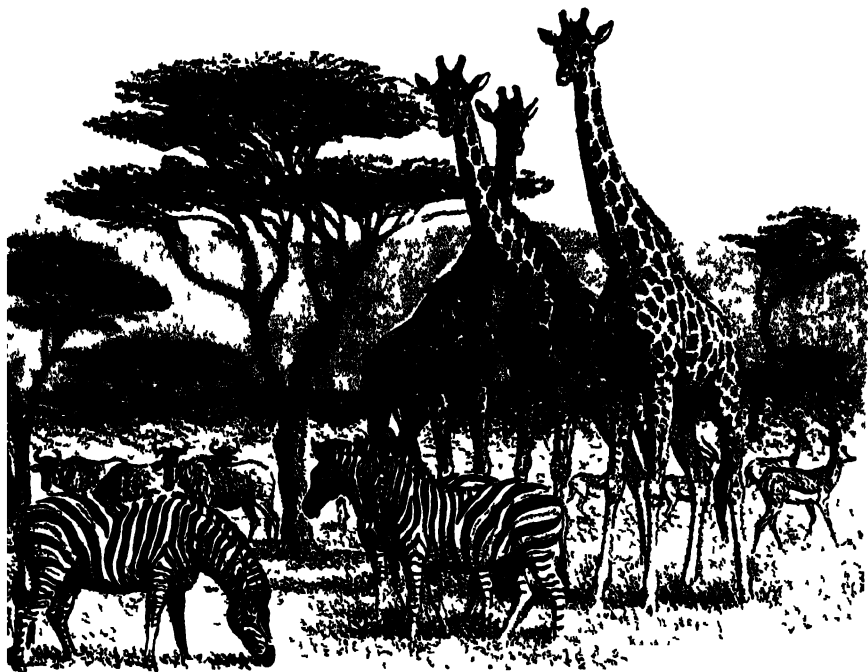


"O.K., then. How about steaming these horns to stretch the ferrules and get a record?"

I don't know if this would have given us a new world's record or only glue, but I declined to make the experiment.

While we were collecting other trophies we saw nothing of Captain Hurst, the lone Englishman, who had a small ranch in the crater. But while we were in Ngorongoro, a runner, carrying his message in the end of a cleft stick, arrived from the District Commissioner in Arusha. The message said that Captain Hurst was dead. His native boys had sent word to Arusha to find out what to do. The Commissioner asked me to investigate.

We went to Captain Hurst's ranch and found his boys sitting around aimlessly waiting for instructions. The head boy told me that their master had been killed ten days before by an elephant. Hurst had



wounded the animal with a shoulder shot. The bull had made off towards a thick clump of bush and Hurst, thinking to intercept the animal, had gone round the bush from the other side. He met the bull face to face. The elephant grabbed the man in his trunk before Hurst could raise his rifle.

Hurst's head boy told me, "The elephant carried *bwana* Hurst to the nearest tree and beat him against the trunk. The *bwana* screamed and the elephant beat him again. The *bwana* screamed a second time and the elephant dashed him against the tree still harder. Then the *bwana* did not scream any more so the elephant dropped him and went away."

Captain Hurst had lived in a little thatched cottage overlooking the crater. He could sit on his front porch in the evenings and watch the grandest collection of game that mortal man has ever seen grazing round him. The climate of Ngorongoro is about perfect. And although the

mountain is only a few hundred miles from the equator, the high altitude keeps the crater cool and pleasant. In that wonderful spot it is always spring. With game in plenty round him, a spring of cool water by the door and forests full of fruit, a man could live there as happily as though in the Garden of Eden. Looking round me, I felt that I would be content to spend the rest of my life in Ngorongoro, except that it seemed so utterly remote.

After this safari, I was launched as a white hunter. I learned later, painfully, the truth of an old white hunter's saying, "It's not the wild beasts that are the problem . . . it's the clients."

Clients, Brave and Otherwise

I SPENT much of my next twenty years as a white hunter, generally fitting out in Nairobi and going everywhere from the Belgian Congo to Southern Abyssinia. During those years I guided the Prince and Princess Schwarzenberg, the Baron and Baroness Rothschild, many of the lesser Continental nobility, a number of rajahs and maharajahs, and a scattering of American millionaires. I also guided many sportsmen in very moderate circumstances who had spent years saving up enough money so that they could have a go at African big game.

Like most white hunters, I was usually employed by one of the big organizations in Nairobi that make a business of fitting out safaris for clients. Although I have worked for several of these organizations, I spent most of my time with Safariland, Inc., a company that has been in operation since the turn of the century and has arranged safaris for the Martin Johnsons, the Aga Khan and, in recent years, M.G.M.'s *King Solomon's Mines*. Safariland keeps a number of white hunters on its payroll and during the boom years of the twenties, as soon as one of us returned from a safari, he was immediately sent out on another.

I never knew beforehand if my next client would be a nervous individual who merely wanted to camp a few miles outside Nairobi so that he could later boast of having been "on safari through the wilds of Africa" or a keen sportsman who was willing to risk his life to obtain a fine trophy. Whatever my clients wanted, I did my best to provide, whether it was a record head or an easy tour of the game country.

Despite what I have to say about clients, I want to make it plain that I was never one of those white hunters who affects to despise them. Clients were my bread and butter. Some of my clients were as good as the best and some were bad, but I did what I could to please them all.

The relationship between a white hunter and his clients is a peculiar one. He is their employee, subject to their orders, yet he is responsible to both the safari outfitter and the Game Department for the clients' conduct and also for their safety. If his clients wish to do something that the hunter considers unwise, he must stop them. If the client refuses to be stopped, the hunter is then in a difficult position. I have known of a few cases when white hunters became so indignant at their clients' constant refusal to observe the laws of common sense that they took the whole outfit back to Nairobi and cancelled the safari. I am happy to say no such disaster happened to me.

Quarrels between the white hunter and his client are not always the client's fault. A white hunter is under a constant strain. He combines the responsibilities of a ship's captain with the duties of the mayor of a small and constantly moving town. He presides over two or three dozen native boys, ranging from the kitchen totò who cleans the dishes to the head tracker and gun bearer on whom his life may some day depend. He must preserve discipline among the boys and yet keep them happy. If anything goes wrong, he alone is held accountable.

The white hunter must oversee the putting up and taking down of the tents. He must see that all the thousand and one items of equipment are correctly loaded and unloaded. If one of the lorries breaks down, he must be able to repair it. When someone falls ill, the white hunter must be able to doctor him. Yet he must never forget that his main duty is that of a hunter and he must be able to produce game.

To do this successfully, he must know many different sections of the country and know each one intimately. Most clients want a representative bag—elephant, rhino, buffalo, lion and the larger antelopes. Not all these animals live in the same locality. After the client has shot his lion, the white hunter must then take him some two or three hundred miles to a completely different section after rhino or buffalo. Then into another section after elephant. The hunter must know all the twisting network of trails that cover each of these districts. He must know which roads are passable in wet weather, where the best camp sites are, which sites are



FROM Nderobo tribesmen I have heard many stories of the wild buffalo's vindictiveness. One man, who walked with a limp, showed me that his heel was gone—bitten clean off at the ankle. He told me that a buffalo had done it.

He had been walking through the bush on his way to his shamba, when he heard a snort from the underbrush. He turned and bolted; the thunder of hoofs behind told

him that his pursuer was a buffalo. The man had a fair start but the buffalo rapidly gained on him. At the last instant, the man made a desperate jump and managed to grab the limb of a tree just as the buffalo rushed under him. The animal turned and coming back stood below the man, pawing the ground and snorting with fury. The native had pulled his feet up under him but the strain of holding them there grew too much. His right leg became cramped and for a moment he had to extend it. Immediately the waiting buffalo rushed up and nipped off the man's heel with his teeth as though it were a twig. Then, seemingly appeased by the taste of blood, he went away, leaving the half-fainting man still clinging to the tree limb.

likely to have water near them and at what time of year. Above all, he must know how the grass will be growing in the various parts of the country at different seasons. Grass is of the greatest importance in hunting. If the grass is high, little can be seen since the tall growth conceals the animals. Also, the game animals migrate from one region to another as they follow the grass and the carnivorous beasts follow them.

Food is an ever-present problem. No safari can carry enough food for all the native boys and the clients. The white hunter must shoot meat "for the pot." It is by no means always easy in Africa to knock over a suitable meat animal. Suppose the client wishes to go after rhino or elephant. These animals live in bush where there are comparatively few

antelopes. After going a few days without meat, the native boys grow restless and quarrelsome. Yet the client may not wish to spend a day or more going into plain country after meat for them. After all, the man is paying forty pounds or better a day for his safari and he does not want to waste time. Yet the boys grow sullen on a diet of maize.

Even in good hunting areas, the white hunter must try to vary the safari's diet as much as possible. Clients grow tired of kongoni cutlets, impala roasts and tinned foods. The hunter must try to knock over a spur fowl or grouse. Possibly he may catch a few trout for a change. All these things go towards making the client feel that he is getting his money's worth and having a good time.

There are many small details vital to the success of a safari which are easy to overlook. The skinning out of the trophies is as important as securing the skin. If the skinners leave even a square inch of flesh on the hide, it will rot and leave a hole in the skin. Also, if salt is not rubbed in correctly, the trophy will spoil. Then the client, who has spent much time and money to secure that trophy, will be understandably furious. Again, it is the white hunter who takes the blame.

In addition, the white hunter must have a working knowledge of several native languages, know how to drive a heavy lorry over plains full of holes and stumps, understand something of photography, know half a dozen card games, and never under any circumstances lose his temper.

One of the most successful white hunters with Safariland put the matter to me in this way. "Hunter," he said, "you must always remember that only ten per cent of your work is hunting. Ninety per cent is keeping your clients amused." Now I was never much of a clubman and so Safariland tried to send me out with sportsmen who were mainly interested in obtaining trophies. But during the rush seasons no such distinction could be made. Then I had to learn to study my clients and try to gratify their whims. This I did—up to certain limits.

Among my first aristocratic clients were a French count and his countess who wanted a few African trophies for their château in Normandy. I arranged a luxury safari for the couple. I saw to it that we had big, comfortable tents divided up into several small dressing- and bathrooms. The couple had eight trained native boys as their personal servants and I took along enough supplies to stock a small hotel. Before we left,

the count made it clear that the only commodity he was interested in was a plentiful supply of whisky. I took along more whisky bottles than I did cartridges, but without the whisky I fear I'd have had a dead count on my hands and no mistake.

A few days out, I spotted a fine black-maned lion and took my clients over to him. When the countess saw the lion, she screamed and wanted to go back to Nairobi. The count lifted his gun with shaking hands and then asked anxiously, "Suppose I shoot and don't kill, what does he do, eh?"

"He may charge, but I'll stop him with my rifle," I said.

The count shook his head. "I think I need a drink," he said and off we went back to camp. That was all the lion hunting the count did. But that evening the couple called me in to have drinks with them.

"I have thought of a clever idea," said the count. "You are a hunter, no? So you go and hunt. I will stay here and you get me nice trophies to show my friends."

I agreed that this was an excellent suggestion, saving us all time and worry. I got them several good trophies and the countess posed on each one for photographs wearing her shooting togs and holding her rifle. She always asked me anxiously, "Hunter, how do I look?" I knew little about such matters but I always told her she looked very well indeed and my answer seemed to please her.

One evening after I had turned in, the flap of my tent opened and the countess came in wearing a lace Parisian nightgown that covered her but poorly and carrying a beer-glass full of whisky. She sat down on the edge of my cot, offered me a drink, and then took one herself. "Hunter, my friend, I am lonely," she told me sadly. "Countess, where's your husband?" I asked her. She looked at me a long time. "Hunter, you Englishmen ask the strangest questions," she said and flounced out of my tent. For the next few days she was a bit cool



towards me but when the safari was over, both she and the count kissed me as they said good-bye. A very affectionate couple. I enjoyed meeting them.

It is a curious fact that some people lose their heads when they go into the bush and forget ordinary conventions. They seem to feel that they have escaped from civilization and all its responsibilities. Women especially succumb to this strange state of mind. There is much of the savage in all of us, but a man will work out his primitive instincts by shooting while a certain type of woman often turns to sex. Usually the white hunter is the object of her devotion. In the bush a white hunter cuts a fine figure. He is efficient, brave and picturesque. These ladies never stop to think how this dashing individual would appear on the dance floors of London or in a Continental drawing room. One of the greatest scandals of Kenya came about as the result of a lady's unwise attachment to a white hunter.

This tragedy occurred near the turn of the century. The white hunter involved was internationally known. One of the parties he guided consisted of a wealthy man and his attractive young wife. When the safari returned to Nairobi, the husband was not with them. The hunter announced that his client had shot himself with a revolver while delirious. However, the hunter could not stop his native boys from talking and the story got round that the man had met with foul play. The government sent a police officer to investigate. The officer back-tracked the safari and found where the client had been buried. He dug up the body and discovered that the man had been shot in the back of the head by a heavy calibre rifle. Meanwhile, the hunter and the dead man's wife had left the country. As far as I know, they were never heard of again.

I believe that Ernest Hemingway based his famous story *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* on this incident.

After this case, the conduct of white hunters with their clients was carefully checked. Any suspicion of a scandal was enough to deprive a hunter of his licence and ruin him for life. Although such careful supervision is no doubt a good thing, it occasionally puts a hunter in awkward positions.

I was once guiding a German baron who had a very handsome wife and was insanely jealous of her. He hired an ex-major in the German

Army to stay with the lady at all times. This male chaperon earned his pay, for he never let the baroness out of his sight. The major was a trustworthy man but a bit heavy-footed and he made so much noise clumping along that he scared all the game away. This annoyed the baroness, who was a very keen sportswoman, but if she ordered the major away, he refused to go, looking suspiciously at the lady and me all the while. As the baron did not go out in the bush much, we usually had the major with us and so we got little hunting done. One afternoon I mentioned to the baroness that there was a donga near the camp that usually held several lions. At supper that evening, she told her husband about the spot, adding, "Hunter says that the cover is so thick that taking three people would be dangerous."

She gave me a kick under the table as she spoke so I nodded my head and said, "Yes, I have my doubts if three can make it." I was always a poor liar, so the major glared at us and said he was coming, too, cover or no.

Next morning we started off to the donga. We put up no lion, but there was a fine wart-hog and the baroness wanted his tusks. The major stood on one side of the ravine and the baroness on the other, while I went in to drive the beast out.

I had taken only a few steps when I heard the baroness shout, "Hunter, come quick!"

Thinking a lion had appeared, I ran to the spot throwing off the safety catch on my rifle. I burst through some little bushes and saw the baroness standing there naked to the waist. For an instant, I thought she was mad. Then I saw her desperately pulling safari ants off her body. These ants are terrible things, half an inch long, with jaws like pincers. I have been attacked by them myself in the bush and, like the baroness, I tore off my clothes to get at the creatures, for no one can stand the torture of their bites.

I spent several minutes pulling ants off the baroness. Then I had to scrape her body with the back of my knife blade to get out the insects' heads, for the ants will let themselves be pulled apart rather than relax their grip.

The lady had just got her clothes on again when the major came bursting through the bush on us.

"What's going on here?" he screamed.

"John and I were doing a little hunting together," said the baroness casually.

The major glared at us but there was nothing he could say.

Later, I sat down on the ground and shook as though I'd had a close call with a rhino, for if the man had come upon us a few minutes before, he would have reported the matter to the baron and I would have lost my hunter's licence for sure and certain. Under the circumstances no one would have believed either the lady or myself. Such are the perils of the wild with clients.

I do not wish to give the impression that a white hunter's duties are merely to keep out of scrapes with beautiful women. I have described the prosaic task of overseeing the equipment necessary for a two or three months' trip "into the blue."

In the case of a large safari, this is a tremendous undertaking. Some clients travel with a small city of tents equipped with generators to supply electricity. Each tent has its own bathroom, toilet facilities and an Electrolux icebox. To keep the cars and trucks in running condition, the equivalent of a small machine shop is taken along. Six and seven course meals that would not disgrace the best hotels in Paris or London are served regularly with a choice of several dishes and the best of wines. With such elaborate safaris, usually two or even three white hunters go along—one to handle the supplies and trucks, one to keep the clients entertained and one to find game.

As was only natural, the clients who wanted the luxury of these big safaris were seldom greatly interested in hunting. I remember guiding a rajah who refused to step out of his touring car to shoot a rhino which, I believe, carried a world's record horn. The rajah was afraid of getting the turn ups of his trousers wet in the tall grass. He insisted on trying to approach the animal in his car and the rhino took fright and galloped away.

Yet a short time after I was with this rajah, I had the privilege of guiding Commander Glen Kidston, a British sportsman, who wanted to go to the Northern Frontier after oryx, a large straight horned antelope. We took with us nothing but the barest essentials. In the desert country along the Abyssinian border the heat was so terrible that the rhinos scooped hollows in the sand during the day to bear the strain. Very few safaris ever penetrated that country and it was easy to see why.

Water was more precious than gold. The natives dug in the ground for it and considered themselves well paid for an hour's hard work by a few mouthfuls of dirty seepage. At one camp, robbers stole our water bags. We had to punch holes in our tins of beans and drink the stale fluid out of them until we reached the next water hole.

In return for all our trouble, Commander Glen Kidston managed to bag what was at that time the world's record oryx and a greater kudu that was a Kenya record.

Until that time I had been receiving fifty pounds a month as a white hunter. After I returned from that safari, my salary was gradually increased to two hundred pounds. At that time, this was considered top salary for a white hunter.

I have always liked to guide sportsmen who were interested in getting fine trophies. I was guiding Mrs. Dorothy McMartin when she bagged a record Hunter's hartebeest. I helped Major Bruce to get a Thomson gazelle with 16¾-inch horns. I, myself, have shot a roan antelope with horns just one half-inch short of the record and have the head of a record suni gazelle that I collected in the Nyeri Forest. Yet I must say that in recent years the passion for "trophy" hunting has reached a point that I consider ridiculous. For a man to spend weeks or months hoping to get an animal with perhaps another quarter of an inch of horn or half an inch more of span simply to see his name in Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game* seems to me a bit foolish.

Records are often freak animals and the trophy instead of being a particularly fine specimen is actually deformed.

Record rhino horns are often long, thin things like overgrown knitting needles, not at all an impressive trophy from my point of view. I prefer a really fine natural horn—thick, powerful and of reasonable length. Such a trophy gives a far better idea of the animal and the strength of his weapon.

Some sportsmen carry their craze for world records to an amazing length. I remember talking to a man who had come back with a gigantic leopard skin measuring over ten feet. As an eight-foot leopard is very unusual, I could not believe my eyes when I saw this monster hide. Later when the owner was not about, I had the chance to examine the skin more closely. The man's native boys had very cleverly let into the centre of the hide a four-foot strip of leopard skin from another trophy,



matching the design so perfectly and doing such an expert job on the sewing, that not until I turned the skin over and examined the bottom did I detect the trick.

Perhaps a hunter's most disagreeable task is to guide a man who behaves like a stoat in a hen-house, killing for the very love of causing destruction. I have done my share of shooting but always with a purpose. Yet some men delight in killing simply for the pleasure of seeing death. Often a client would say to me, "Hunter, I am allowed three hundred animals on my licence and as yet I have only shot two hundred. Are you sure I can get the rest in the next few days?" However, with most of them the mania soon passes.

I have guided several Americans who came over hoping for a big bag, only to throw their rifles away after a few days and devote the rest of the trip to photography.

Very few sportsmen will pass up a fine trophy for sentiment after spending weeks of hard work to get the animal. Yet I have seen it happen.

I took out a young Yale student who was very keen to get a bongo, one of the finest and rarest of the forest antelope. Now almost the only way to get a bongo is to run the animal down with dogs. My client and I had a long, hard trek to a native village deep in the forest and I told the headman that we needed dogs for a bongo hunt. He willingly supplied me with a scratch pack of a dozen village dogs, shabby little brutes but keen on a trail. We started out and after several false starts we heard the dogs barking and the villagers shouting. Tearing our way through the thick undergrowth, we found the dogs had bayed a fine bongo in a little stream. The buck was standing up to his knees in the water with one foot raised, challenging his tormentors to come any closer. Round him was the baying pack, flanked by the yelling natives

"There's your trophy," I said pointing.

My client raised his gun and then lowered it again "I can't shoot that poor beast. He hasn't a chance with all those dogs and people round him. It isn't sporting."

At the present time big-game photography has largely superseded big game shooting.

In my youth, the only animals that were photographed were dead animals. This made the problem of animal photography very simple. After your client had shot his trophy, he posed on the dead beast while you clicked the camera. But today people are determined to secure pictures of living animals. The animals seldom care to co operate. A white hunter guiding a photographer has a difficult task.

At first, photography was combined with shooting. This never gave good results. A man must use either a camera or a gun—not both. The requirements of the two sports are very different. A sportsman wants his trophy. He cares nothing about weather conditions or the pose of the beast. A photographer must have the sun in a certain position and the animal out in the open so that he can get a good, clear picture.

Photographing lions today has become a joke. When the game in

Kenya showed signs of becoming overshot, the government declared several large areas game preserves. Lions in these reserves, knowing themselves protected, became remarkably indifferent to humans. In some areas, lions virtually depend on photographic safaris to supply them with food.

In many reserves, lions have become so used to human beings that the sound of a rifle shot actually attracts them. They know the shot means that some photographer is shooting an antelope for them. These lions will trot after every lorry they see like big dogs, expecting the people inside to feed them. If the lorry stops, the lions often walk over and lie down in the car's shade rather than take the trouble to walk to the nearest bush.

I took out one party that spent weeks photographing lions in every conceivable position. Still they wanted something more startling, something that had never been done before by other photographic safaris. Finally one man had a brilliant idea.

"Why don't we get a picture of lions and humans at dinner together?" he suggested. "It'll be terrific! Never before photographed!"

No sooner said than done.

We set up a table with a linen cloth and a vase of flowers. Places were laid and chairs put in place. Vegetable salad, fruit and beer were the bill of fare. A zebra was shot and dragged within camera view of the table. I had it carefully staked down to make sure the lions did not pull it out of focus. The three cameramen took their positions in the truck while the rest of the party sat down at the table.

I fired my rifle a few times to attract the lions. Shortly, a pride came hurrying along towards us. In a few minutes they were hard at work on the zebra.

Now the cinema cameras began to purr. Shaking natives in white robes served the meal, their courage having been much strengthened by a liberal distribution of bakshesh. The two meals progressed within a few yards of each other, the lions caring not a whit what we did as long as we left them alone to finish their meal.

Photographing other big-game animals is by no means so simple a matter, especially as photographers are constantly demanding "action" pictures. I have guided many photographers and, sooner or later, they all want to photograph a charge.

One year I took out a young American named Walter Sykes who wanted rhino pictures. Walter was only sixteen years old but a very keen photographer. The boy must have got the best pictures of charging rhinos ever made, for in one day we had six charges, not one of them induced.

I cannot speak too highly of this lad's courage. I have never had a client who kept a cooler head during times of great stress.

On this great day, lorrying over an open plain studded with thorn trees, we spotted a browsing rhino. I stopped the car and we approached him cautiously, taking care to keep down wind. The bull continued to chew his meal, his molars making a noise like a hand-decoricator. Walter lifted his camera and began to take pictures. Instantly, the rhino charged us.

When he was slightly more than twenty yards away, I shouted to turn him. If possible, I never allow a dangerous animal to come closer than twenty yards. At less than that distance, the momentum of his charge will carry him on top of the hunter unless a bullet hits him in exactly the right spot.

At my shout, this bull twisted like a good forward in Rugby and went by on our right.

I do not know why the Yaida rhino were so aggressive, but we had five more charges that day.

One I had to turn by firing across the animal's snout. He passed between my gun bearer and myself. After that experience, I was ready to stop but Walter still wanted one more picture. So although it was getting late, we continued to look for rhino.

We headed for a valley where there were always plenty of rhino to be found. We saw a large cow rhino standing under an acacia tree and Walter began photographing her. I saw the cow was beginning to grow restless and might charge at any moment. Then my native gun bearer pointed with his puckered lips to the left and right. Two more rhino were approaching us from opposite sides.

I had no wish to be "rhinoed" from three directions at the same time. I touched Walter on the shoulder and we began to retreat as rapidly as possible, walking backward.

Suddenly the old cow charged us.

She was forty-seven yards away when she started—I measured the

distance later. Walter instantly lifted his cinema camera and began to photograph the charge. I waited with my gun ready. I shouted to turn her. She came on. The gun bearer yelled and waved his arms. She paid no attention to him.

Without taking his eyes from the finder of his camera, Walter muttered, "When I say 'Take her!'—shoot."

On such occasions, the white hunter must justify his client's faith in him.

Walter had complete confidence that I could drop the cow at the first shot. I waited with my rifle ready as the animal came down on us. Moments, mere flashes of time, pass quickly in such emergencies. The beat of the rhino's hooves grew louder. Her head was down at a perfect tilting angle, ready for the toss. Walter refused to give an inch and kept his camera going. When she was twenty yards away I raised my rifle, waiting for Walter to give me the word to fire. He did not speak, the rhino came on. She was now less than fifteen yards away. I could wait no longer. My finger tightened on the trigger. At the same instant, Walter called, "Take her!" His voice and my shot came almost together. The heavy double rifle bellowed. The cow died in her tracks, the bullet striking her in the gradual slope between the ear base and the eye. She hit the ground with a crash and lay there, not a leg moving nor an eye twitching. Walter, pale but unruffled, calmly remarked, "Sir, I have seen you in action."

The day may come when the camera will take the place of the gun in African hunting. In many ways, it will, no doubt, be a fine thing. Yet I am glad that I lived in a time when a man went out against the great animals with a rifle in his hands instead of a device to take pictures. Sometimes I think the animals themselves may have liked it better, too.

Lion Hunting in Masailand

I saw my first Masai spear hunt in the middle twenties when I was working for the Kenya Game Department on my first assignment as a control hunter, or game exterminator. This time the game were lions.

The Masai's homeland, now a government reserve, is a great tableland in the centre of Kenya.

The Masai, a war-like tribe of herdsmen, are also a nation of spearmen. They scorn the bow and arrows as the tools of cowards who are afraid to close with their enemies. The young warriors of the tribe, called the *moran*, subsist mainly on a diet of fresh blood and milk. This they consider the only proper food for fighting men. The neighbouring tribes lived in terror of a Masai war party. For sport, the *moran* amuse themselves by killing lions with their spears—a feat I would have considered well-nigh impossible. In the old days, the Masai had lived almost completely on other tribes, much as any predatory animal lives on its weaker neighbours.

Now, it is a strange fact that although animals that kill their own prey, such as hawks and wild dogs, have no natural enemies they seldom increase in numbers. They live at such a high pitch that they use themselves up very quickly. Also, in spite of their strength and ferocity, they are strangely delicate while their prey is apt to be much more hardy. This is also true of humans. When the British Government stopped the Masai's raiding, the tribes near the Masai increased so in population that they became a major problem. But the Masai, with their whole way of life changed, were threatened with extinction. They were forced to raise more cattle as a means of livelihood. Partly as a result of the overcrowd-

IN THE Ituri Forest, a vast district spreading across the north-eastern part of the Belgian Congo, I found that the pygmies who lived there were so eager to please that they would cheerfully promise to bring in any sort of animal we might mention. I had a copy of Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game* with illustrations of game animals the world over. I started to turn the pages of this book to show the pygmies what animals we wanted. The little men were most co-operative, even pointing to pictures of the American moose and the Scottish antlered deer, asking me if I'd care for one or two of those animals. The climax came when I happened to turn to a page showing an Arctic walrus. The smallest of the hunters pointed a finger at the pictures and said, "Ah, I know that animal well. He lives in the deepest parts of the forest and comes out only at night. He is very fierce and kills men with those great tusks of his in order to eat them, but if you wish, I'll trap one for you."

ing caused by the increased herds, a terrible epidemic of rinderpest swept the district. Cattle died by the thousands until only a small number of breeding stock remained.

Lions readily became scavengers, and with the plains littered by the carcasses of cattle, these big cats increased greatly in numbers. Weakling cubs that would soon have died under normal conditions grew to maturity and thus in a surprisingly short time the Masai country was overrun with lions.

When the epidemic had run its course and there were no more dead cows lying about, the lions turned on the live cattle. The Masai sallied out with spear and shield to defend the precious remnants of their breeding stock but for every lion killed, one or two of the young *morán* were mauled.

A wound made by a lion almost invariably causes blood poisoning, for the claws of the animals are coated with a rotting film from their prey. Thus even a superficial scratch often means death to a native. So many of the warriors were fatally injured in these lion hunts that the elders of the tribe feared the Masai were losing all their best men. In the old days, the Masai would have corrected this state of affairs by raiding other tribes for more women and cattle. But under present conditions they had no solution but to appeal to the government.

Captain A. T. A. Ritchie, head of the Kenya Game Department, having decided that I was qualified for the task, presented me with one of the most remarkable offers ever made to a white hunter. I was given three months to kill the trouble giving lions and to bring the lion population under control. I was to be allowed to keep the hides for my pay.

The skins of first-class, black maned lions were then bringing twenty pounds each and even lioness hides were worth three pounds. Although the risks were great, this would mean a large sum of money for Hilda and me. We had four children by this time and it is surprising how much children cost to bring up, even in Kenya.

My success soon settled the scepticism of the first Masai I met. When I told these *morán* that I had come to kill lions, the warriors seemed rather amused and said I would have trouble killing lions with nothing but a gun. A spear, they declared, was a proper weapon to use on a lion. The Masai have great contempt for fire-arms, dating back to the old days when a Masai war party had little trouble

~~Outrigger~~ Arab slave traders armed only with 'muzzle-loading' muskets.

Apparently ~~to~~ call my bluff, the young men told me of two lions not far from camp, and led me to the dry bottom of a ravine. The floor of the ravine was covered with sand and the Masai easily began tracking. We rounded a bend in the winding course of the ravine and saw before us two lions lying stretched out on the sand like big cats. They both rose and stood glowering at us.

The two *moran* stood with their spears upraised waiting for the charge. A noble sight. I took quick aim for the chest of the larger cat and fired. He reared at the impact of the bullet, grunted and fell heavily on his side. His companion promptly bolted into some heavy bush on the left bank of the drift.

We followed him up and began to throw stones. Suddenly the bushes swayed violently and the lion burst out and came for me. He was bunched up almost in a ball, his ears flattened back and his back arched. He seemed to fly through the air across the sandy bottom.

I fired and the bullet hit him fairly between the eyes. He dropped without a quiver. In the cool morning air, a tiny curl of smoke rose from the bullet hole.

The two Masai went into a war dance of delight. The tense excitement of the charge and the thrill of seeing two fine-maned lions lying before us was too much for them. Still holding their spears, the men bent forward, thrusting out their behinds. Then they suddenly straightened up, throwing out their chests at the same time. As their ecstasy increased, this curious jerky motion speeded up in tempo until they were going like pistons. This was a curious sort of emotional seizure, common among the Masai, and now known among whites who live with this remarkable people as "the shakes." I had never seen anything like it and could not understand how men who had calmly prepared to meet the charge of an infuriated lion with nothing but their spears should now become hysterical.

As word of this and similar exploits spread, I was soon besieged by Masai runners who had come for miles to beg me to kill their lions. Each runner vied with the others in making wild claims for his particular district. One man assured me that near his village the lions were more numerous than leaves on the trees. Another said that in his valley a man could hardly walk fifty yards without seeing several of the beasts. It

seemed that no matter where I went I was sure to find plenty of lions, and my services would be welcome.

I received a rebuff, however, when I was staying in a small Masai community not far from Lake Magadi. The night before, a lion had jumped the twelve foot *boma* that surrounded the village, seized a cow, and leaped back over the barrier with the cow in his mouth. I know this feat sounds incredible as the lion weighed no more than four hundred pounds and the cow probably weighed nearly twice as much. Yet a male lion can perform this exploit with no more trouble than a fox has in carrying off a chicken.

The lion gets partly under the carcass and shifts the weight on to his back while still holding the cow's throat in his mouth. When jumping the barricade, the lion's tail becomes absolutely rigid and seems to act as a balance. The Masai have assured me that a lion without a tail could not possibly perform this feat.

I was prepared to start out on the lion's trail the next morning, but the *moran* in this community told me somewhat contemptuously that my help was not needed. They would handle the situation themselves. At that time, I found it hard to believe that a group of men could kill an adult lion with spears. I asked if I could go along and bring my gun. Permission was politely granted me, and I never doubted that it would fall to my lot to kill any lions that we might find.

We started off at daybreak. I followed the spearmen. There were ten of them. Magnificent looking men, slender but finely muscled, not one under six feet. To give their limbs free play, each man removed his one



garment, the long piece of cloth they wear draped over their shoulders, and wrapped it round his left arm. They carried their brightly-painted shields balanced on their shoulders. Their spears were in their right hands. The warriors wore their ostrich-plume headdresses as though going into battle and bracelets of fur round their ankles. Otherwise, they were completely naked.

We picked up the spoor of the lion and the *moran* began to track. The lion had gorged on the cow during the night and was lying up in some dense cover. They threw stones into the bushes at random until the savage growls of the lion showed he had been hit.

When the *moran* had spotted the cat by his angry grunts and snarls, they began to throw stones in good earnest; then the bushes began to shake. Suddenly the lion burst out a hundred yards from us and went bounding away across the plains, his gorged belly swinging from side to side as he ran.

Instantly the Masai were after him, giving their wild cries as they sped through the tall, yellow grass. The lion, still heavy with his great meal, did not run far. He stopped and turned at bay. The spearmen spread out to encircle him.

The lion stood in the middle of the ring, looking this way and that, snarling in a way to make one's blood run cold as the spearmen slowly closed in.

The lion allowed the men to come within forty yards. Then I could tell that he was preparing to charge. His head was held low, just above his outstretched forepaws. His hindquarters were slightly arched so that he could bring his rear legs well forward and get the maximum spring behind his rush. He began to dig his claws into the ground, much as a sprinter digs in with his spiked shoes to make sure he does not slip when he makes his first jump.

I concentrated on the sinister inverted curve of the lion's tail. Just before he charges, a lion always twitches the tasselled tip of his tail three times in rapid succession. On the third twitch he comes for you at amazing speed, going so fast he seems only a small part of his real size.

The spearmen knew as well as I did that the lion was preparing to attack. By a single impulse, all their spear arms moved back together for the cast. The men were so tense with excitement that their taut shoulder muscles twitched slightly, making ripples of sunlight play along the

spear blades. You could have driven a nail into any one of them without his feeling it.

Suddenly the tip of the lion's tail began to twitch. One! Two! Three! Then he charged for the ring of spearmen. At once half a dozen spears leaped through the air towards him. I saw one plunge into his shoulder and the next instant the spearhead broke through the hide on his other side. The lion never paused in his stride.

In his path stood one of the *moran*, a youngster on his first hunt. The boy never flinched. He braced himself to meet the charge, holding his shield in front of him and swaying back slightly so as to put the whole weight of his body into his spear thrust. With one blow the lion knocked the young *moran's* shield out of his hand as though it were cardboard. Then he reared up, trying to sweep the boy towards him with his outstretched paws.

The boy drove his spear a good two feet into the lion's chest. The mortally wounded beast sprang on him, and the young warrior went down under the weight of the great cat.

Instantly all the other *moran* were round the dying lion. It was too close quarters for spears. The men used their double-edged *simis*, heavy knives about two feet long. Shouldering each other out of the way, they hacked like madmen at the lion's head. In a matter of seconds, they had sliced the head to pieces.

I examined the wounded boy. His wounds were truly frightful yet he seemed completely indifferent to them. I sewed him up with a needle and thread. He paid no more attention to the process than if I were patting him on the back.

When we returned to the Masai *manyatta* or village, the wounded boy was urged to eat great quantities of raw beef and then given cattle blood as a purgative so that he could gorge himself again. Some of the other *moran* had been clawed by the lion but they made no attempt to guard against infection, except to wash their wounds with water. Later I saw some Masai communities soak the root of a bush called the *olkilorite* in water, which gives it a permanganate of potash colour. It seems to act as an antiseptic and promotes healing.

I hope the lad recovered. He certainly held top honours for the day, and the young girls were looking at him with such admiration that, if he lived, he would have no trouble picking out a suitable sweetheart.

The Masai believe that the bravest act a man can perform is to grab a lion by the tail and hold the animal so the other warriors can close in with their spears and *sims*. Any man who performs this feat four times is given the title of *melombukı* and ranks as a captain. It is also an unwritten law among them that any man who gains this title must be willing to fight anything living. I doubt if more than two out of a thousand Masai ever become *melombukı*, although the competition among the *moran* to gain this honour is very keen.

I have seen several of these "tail pullings" during Masai lion hunts and it is a wonder to me that the men attempting the feat ever come out alive.

I remember one hunt in which fifty or more spearmen were involved. They had put up a lion and a lioness. The animals tried to reach some heavy scrub but the warriors cut them off. The lions retreated into a small clump of bush near a dry, sandy watercourse. When possible, a pursued lion nearly always makes for one of these dry stream beds with its canopies of overhanging bush. In a matter of minutes, the *moran* had the thicket surrounded and began to move forward for the kill.

As the circle of yelling warriors closed in, the concealed lions began to growl. Then, without any warning, the larger of the lions broke from the cover and made a rush for freedom. He was a fine sight as he dashed along the stream bottom, tail down and going all out at a gallop. He was headed straight for two *moran*, who raised their spears and prepared to meet his charge.

But the big male wished only to escape. He gave a mighty bound straight over the heads of the two spearmen, spinning one of them round sideways with a blow from his flank.

The other *moran* made tongue clicking sounds of disapproval, partly because the two young men had allowed the lion to escape and partly because the lion had refused to fight.

I have often noticed that the old lions with the finest manes are more reluctant to give battle than young males or females. I suppose they learn discretion with the years. It has also seemed to me that lions are able to tell young, inexperienced *moran* and will deliberately direct their attack at these youngsters. This may be nothing but my imagination, yet the younger men are apt to be hesitant and uncertain in their actions and I believe the lions can detect it.



HUNTER

As the spearmen closed in round the thicket, they bunched together, jostling each other in their desire to be first to spill blood. The lioness was clearly visible in the bush, giving grating roars. When the *moran* were within ten yards of her, spears began to fly. One of the spears struck the lioness in the loin and she came out with a scream of rage and pain. For an instant she stood up on her hind legs, pawing the air like the crest on a coat of arms. Then she dropped to bite at the spear in her flank. At that moment, one of the *moran* threw down his spear and, rushing forward, grabbed her by the root of her tail.

A *moran* never grabs a lion by the tasselled end of the tail. A lion can make his tail as stiff as a gun barrel, and a man would be swept aside by a single jerk.

At once the *moran's* comrades dashed in, slashing with their *simis*. At moments like this, the spearmen work themselves up to a pitch of blind frenzy. They seem to be mere automatic stabbers. Their faces are expressionless. There is no teamwork; each man is out to do the killing by himself. The lioness was digging her hind feet into the ground to get purchase forward and the tail puller was dragging her back. Suddenly the lioness went up on her hind legs, striking left and right with her paws at the men round her. Although I saw her blows go home, the men never flinched.

They told me afterwards that they never feel any pain at the time of a mauling—they are at too high a pitch of excitement. Apparently neither does the lion. Both sides continue to fight until one drops from loss of blood.

Slowly the lioness fell to the ground. Then all I could see were the flashing blades of the *simis* as the men hacked away in their blind fury. There must have been a dozen spears in the body.

I did what I could for the men injured in this fight. Two of them had deep claw and fang incisions and were losing considerable blood. As I sewed up one man's injuries, he glanced down casually at the terrible cuts and made the same contemptuous clicking sound with his tongue that the *moran* had made when they saw the first lion escape.

Strangely enough, I have never heard of any bones being broken by the lion's teeth. The wounds are all flesh wounds. Apparently the lion's fang teeth are wide enough apart to close round the bones. Yet when a lion grabs a man by the shoulder, his fangs often meet in his victim's

body. If you pour disinfectant into one wound, it will run out of the other.

The spearmen have assured me that a lion's most dangerous weapon is neither his teeth nor his claws proper but what might be called his dewclaws.

On the inside of a lion's forelegs is an extra claw about two inches long. These claws roughly correspond to a man's thumbs. They are curved and very sharp. The dewclaws are usually kept folded against the lion's legs and are difficult to see, but the lion can extend them at will so that they stand out almost at right angles. These two claws are keen as brush hooks and very strong. A lion slashing with them can disembowel a man with one blow.

Today, the government has forbidden the great Masai lion hunts which were customary when I first came to the reserve. Too many of the young men were killed pitting shield and spear against fang and claw.

There are few people alive who ever saw one of these desperate encounters.

At the end of three months in the Masai country I started back to Nairobi with two oxcarts full of lion hides. In ninety days, I had shot eighty-eight lions and ten leopards—a record which I believe has never been approached and, I sincerely hope, never will be.

When the Masai heard I was leaving, they were greatly distressed. The elders of the tribe assembled and, after much jabbering, came to me with a proposition. They knew I was useful, which to them meant a lot. They wanted to buy me from the Game Department and they had settled on five hundred cows as the price. As a good wife costs only three cows, I felt flattered.

The Most Dangerous Game

FOR MANY YEARS clients have been asking me, "Hunter, what do you consider the most dangerous big-game animal in Africa?" No man can answer this question exactly; much depends on circumstances. An animal that may be most dangerous in bush can often be easily shot on open veld. Also, hunters vary considerably in their individual abilities.

For example, a man who can take quick "snap-shots" with a rifle would find a charging lion less formidable than a hunter whose reactions are slower. Again, some hunters have specialized in one type of game and, knowing the animal's habits, are apt to consider it a fairly easy quarry. The same hunter, confronted by a different type of animal, will probably have a series of narrow escapes and naturally conclude that this new beast is very cunning and aggressive.

I have hunted every type of big game in Africa, yet I most certainly am not dogmatic in my listing of the five most dangerous big-game animals.

As I have said, much depends on time, place and the individual man or animal.

First, let me say that any animal can be dangerous when cornered or wounded. I have seen water buck, sable antelope, and wart-hogs put up a desperate fight under such circumstances. So I confine my remarks to the "big five"—the outstanding big-game animals of Africa. These animals have been the cause of the vast majority of hunting fatalities on this continent.

The elephant is by far the most intelligent of this group. But unless he is a rogue, his very intelligence tends to keep him from being a menace to hunters. An elephant knows he is no match against a man armed with a rifle and so does everything possible to avoid man rather than attack him. In elephant hunting, the great problem is generally getting near enough to make the shot.

Naturally there are exceptions. When an elephant knows he is being hunted and finds that he cannot throw the man off his spoor, he may set out to "hunt the hunter." At such times, an elephant is exceedingly dangerous, especially if he has been hunted before and knows something of men and their ways.

It did happen once that an elephant waited for me beside a trail after I had killed his two companions. I was lucky to kill him before he killed me but most elephants simply seek to escape. Also—and in my opinion this is of prime importance—a charging elephant will nearly always turn away from a shot, even if not seriously wounded. Few elephants will push a charge home once they feel the impact of a bullet. For these two reasons, I class the average elephant as the least dangerous of the "big five."



AMONG the many reptiles encountered in the Ituri Forest region of the Belgian Congo are numerous spitting cobras. When provoked, the spitting cobra will rear up with spread hood like an ordinary cobra. But these strange and terrible creatures can actually throw their poison at you. The poison can do no great harm on your skin unless it happens to fall on an open cut, but the snake is wise enough to aim for your eyes. The venom frequently produces blindness and is always terribly painful. The snake throws his venom by tilting his head back and pointing the fangs at your face. Then he suddenly contracts the muscles of his poison glands. The yellow liquid comes flying out of the fangs in two thin jets that can reach a distance of nine feet. I regret to say the reptiles are excellent shots.

The rhino, unlike the elephant, will frequently charge with no provocation whatsoever. In my opinion, this makes him a more dangerous animal.

But a rhino will also generally turn away from a shot.

I have met with three rhinos in a simultaneous charge, killed the middle one (a cow), and watched her escort (two bulls) disappear into the bush on either side of me so rapidly that I could hardly see them go. If those rhinos had been buffalo they would have pressed their attack home and one or the other would surely have tossed me.

I do not mean to say that rhinos will *always* turn from a shot. On another occasion, I was again charged by three rhinos under very similar conditions. I dropped the two leading animals with a left and right, then turned to grab my second gun from the bearer. The man had vanished. He had bolted when the rhinos charged, taking my spare gun with him.

The third rhino was on me.

I have a vivid memory of the animal's face. His eyes were closed and

seemed mere slits. At the last moment, I tried to jump aside. As I did so, I was shot into the air with a suddenness that surprised me. Fortunately, the rhino kept on going and did not return to gore me. In general, rhinos are one-way beasts. I have heard that rhinos close their eyes at the moment of a charge and my observations at that time seem to bear out this theory. However, I have strictly guarded against any further investigations.

I mention this incident to show that no one can tell exactly what an animal may do, but I still claim that few rhinos will press home a charge in the face of gunfire. I, therefore, class them fourth on my list.

Many sportsmen have classed the buffalo as the most dangerous big-game animal in Africa.

There is much to be said for this point of view. The buffalo will push home a charge in spite of a gunshot wound. He is often most aggressive and will charge with comparatively little provocation. When he charges, he presents to the hunter his great boss—the boss being the thick central base to which the horns proper are attached—and only a very heavy-calibre bullet will stop him. If he knocks a man down, he will almost always come back to gore his victim. Also, the buffalo is a cunning antagonist. He will circle and stand by his back trail, waiting for the hunter. This trick is usually played by a wounded buffalo that knows he can go no farther.

Unlike other big game, a buffalo has all his senses equally well developed. Elephant and rhino have excellent scent but poor sight. The great cats have good sight but, for animals, indifferent powers of scent. A buffalo can see, hear and scent equally well. A terrible combination.

Why, then, do I not consider the buffalo Africa's most dangerous big-game animal?

The buffalo's very size counts against him. No beast weighing well over two thousand pounds can effectively conceal himself except in the very thickest bush. Also, a charging buffalo offers such a large target that a man is reasonably sure of hitting him somewhere. If you use a heavy enough gun, you are sure to knock him down. Then you can finish him with your second barrel.

There is another consideration. When a buffalo charges, he seems to come like the wind but actually he cannot do over twenty-five miles per hour. Nor can he reach the top of his speed immediately. This gives a

man time to get his gun up and take aim. For these reasons I class the buffalo as the third most dangerous animal in Africa. *

We now come to the great cats.

I consider the lion the second most dangerous game animal in Africa. I am talking now of a single hunter following a single lion. If you have beaters who will drive the animal out into the open, the whole affair becomes far more simple. I am also assuming that the lion knows he is being hunted and has not suddenly been bolted out of a donga by stones. But to go into the bush after lions with only your gun bearer is a very difficult and dangerous sport.

The lion's ability to conceal himself in the sparsest cover, and his great speed, which requires no build-up—he hits high gear at the first bound—are both factors. Moreover, he is a small target compared with a buffalo. Also he comes at you in a series of great leaps that make it difficult to draw a bead on him. He is as courageous as a buffalo and will not flinch away from a shot. He comes all out, either kill or be killed.

If, hunted under fair conditions, the lion is the second most dangerous animal in Africa, what animal is the most dangerous? In my opinion, the leopard.

I know that many white hunters will not agree with me, yet I hold to my verdict. I have shot a great many of these animals—how many I do not know because we used to hunt them for their hides and kept no records.

Shooting leopards was considered a praiseworthy occupation when I first came to Kenya, because they were most detrimental to stock. Wounds made by a leopard's claws invariably became infected, as his talons, like a lion's, are coated with putrid meat from his kills. Even if a sheep or cow were only lightly scratched, the animal almost always sickened and died. Leopards also showed no hesitation about attacking any rancher who came to the defence of his herds. Many an early settler in Kenya had lost an eye or part of his face as a result of leopard attacks. A charging leopard always leaps for a man's face, trying to tear out his victim's eyes with his germ-laden foreclaws while his rear talons are equally busy. At the same time, he usually fastens his teeth in the neck or shoulder.

A friend and I were once hunting leopard in the Masai Reserve. We saw one of the creatures running up a steep, stony slope. My friend fired,



hitting the cat in the flank. The leopard gave a bound and vanished among the boulders. We picked up the blood spoor and began working our way slowly up the hill, walking a few yards apart with rifles held at the ready.

We had gone about twenty yards when the leopard suddenly burst from behind a boulder and leaped on my friend. The creature simply whizzed through the air—he was nothing but a yellow flash of light. My friend was a quick shot but he did not even have time to bring his rifle up before the cat was on him. I fired while the leopard was still in the air, “snap-shooting” as though my rifle were a shotgun. By great luck the bullet broke both of the leopard’s shoulders and he fell dead on my friend.

A leopard is a smart beast. When he knows that he is being spooored, he will often climb a tree and lie out on a limb overhanging the trail. If the hunter does not see him, the leopard will usually let him pass. But if the hunter happens to glance up and their eyes meet, the leopard is on him like a flash.

A leopard's bushcraft is deficient in one notable respect. Although he may conceal his body perfectly in a mass of foliage, he often leaves his tail hanging down.

I have shot a number of leopards that were waiting for me in ambush simply because they forgot to hide their tails.

This fierce cat has at least one good trait. Unlike lions, leopards are not polygamous and have only one mate. There is strong affection between the couple.

I once set out poisoned bait for a female leopard that had been killing a settler's stock. The next morning, I visited the bait and found the leopardess lying dead across the kill. Beside the dead animal was her mate, his head resting on her body in a caressing attitude. When he saw me he sprang up.

He died beside his beloved consort.

In many parts of Africa, the use of traps, poisons and dogs has virtually exterminated the leopard. In my youth, we thought that the only good leopard was a hide stretched out for drying. But now we are discovering that the leopard played an important part in maintaining nature's balance.

Leopards used to kill thousands of baboons every year, and now that the leopards have been largely wiped out, baboons are proving to be a major control problem. The perfect way to keep them in check is by allowing their natural enemy, the leopard, to destroy them. So leopards are now widely protected and allowed to increase in numbers. Such is the strange way that man works—first he virtually destroys a species and then does everything in his power to restore it.

BOTH the game and the native tribes, as I knew them, are gone. No one will ever see again the great elephant herds led by old bulls carrying a hundred and fifty pounds of ivory in each tusk. No one will ever again hear the yodelling war cries of the Masai as their spearmen sweep the bush after cattle-killing lions. Few indeed will be able to say that they

have broken into country never before seen by a white man. No, the old Africa has passed and I saw it go.

This, then, is a record of the last great days of big game hunting. Nowhere in the world was there game to equal the African game. Nowhere were there animals so big, so powerful or so numerous. Now the greatest hunting era in the world's history is almost over. The events I saw can never be relived.



J. A. Hunter



SINCE THE DAY in 1913 that J. A. Hunter left his family's farm at Glencaple in Scotland to try his luck in Africa, his career has been a varied and thrilling one. He began by working as a pupil on an East African farm, but he and his employer didn't see eye to eye, and soon he found himself a new job as guard on trains travelling between Mombasa and Nairobi. This unexpectedly laid the foundations of his hunting career—for the driver was always willing to stop the train if an elephant or a lion offered a shot.

As "J.A." became more experienced in the ways of African wild life, he took up professional big-game hunting, which he describes so excitingly in his book. Meanwhile the Government were employing him to clear animals out of various areas needed for settlement and to get rid of particularly dangerous beasts. The father of six grown-up children, he now lives with his wife Hilda in Kenya, where for the last fifteen years he has been Warden of large game reserves.

MISCHIEF

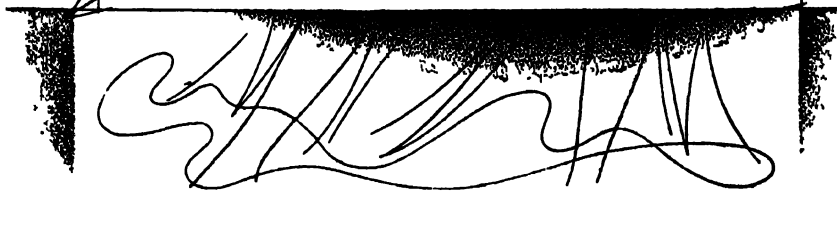
Decorations by James Alexander

The background of the cover is a series of horizontal lines, some solid and some broken by black, irregular shapes that resemble ink blots or stylized figures. The overall effect is abstract and modern.

MISCHIEF

*A condensation
of the book by*

CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG

The bottom section of the cover features a series of horizontal lines, some solid and some broken by black, irregular shapes that resemble ink blots or stylized figures. The overall effect is abstract and modern.

"Mischief" is published by Peter Davies, London

BEFORE Mr. and Mrs. Jones went out for the evening they made sure that their nine-year-old daughter would not be left alone. But loneliness would have been far better than the company they thoughtfully provided for her. In that demure young woman with blue eyes and tawny hair lurked a chilling, sinister quality that was to involve a number of people in a nightmare sequence of events.

In this novel of paralysing suspense Miss Armstrong lays an icy finger on one of the most purely terrifying situations present-day life could provide—a little girl at the mercy of a malevolent baby-sitter.

“A really terrifying little *tour de force* . . . hideously exciting.”

—Maurice Richardson in *The Observer*

“This superlative suspense story.”

—Norman Blood in *Time & Tide*

CHAPTER 1

A MR. PETER O. JONES, the editor and publisher of the *Brennerton Star-Gazette*, was standing in a bathroom in a hotel in New York City, scrubbing his nails. Through the open door his wife, Ruth, saw him fix his image with his eye, heard him declaim over the rush of running water, "Ladies and gentlemen . . ." She winked at Bunny.

Ruth in her long petticoat was sitting at the dressing table, gently powdering her thin bare shoulders. Her carefully reddened lips kept smiling because she knew this long drawn out ritual, this polishing of every tooth and every toenail, was only to heighten the wonderful fun.

It was The Night. Ruth sighed, from a complexity of emotions.

What a formula, she thought, is an hotel room. Everything one needs. And every detail pursued with such heavy handed comfort, such gloomy good taste, it becomes a formula for luxury. The twin beds, severely clean, austere spread. The lamp and the telephone between. Chest of drawers, dressing-table. Desk and desk chair (if the human unit needs to take his pen in hand) Bank of windows, on a court, with the big steam radiator across below them, metal topped. Curtains in hotel-ecru and in hotel-brocade. Easy chair in hotel maroon. The standard lamp. The standing ash-tray, that hideous useful thing. The vast clothes closet.

Over this basic formula they had spread the froth of their preparations. Her rose-coloured evening dress swung with the hook of its hanger over the clothes closet door. Peter's rummaged suitcase stood open on the luggage bench and his things were strewn on his bed. The top of the chest of drawers was piled with stuff that at home would have been hidden in the drawers. Powder and ashes had spilled gloriously on the carpet. All the lights were blazing.

All the lights were blazing in Bunny's room, too, the adjoining room that was exactly like this one.

Peter turned the water off, reached for a towel, stood in the bathroom door in singlet and his dress trousers with his braces hanging down over his rump. Turning out his patent-leather toes, he bowed. "Ladies and gentlemen . . ." He began to pantomime, clowning for Bunny. Ruth turned to watch what she loved to see, the smooth skin of Bunny's face ripple and twinkle as it always did before the giggle came out.

Bunny was nine. Her dark brows went up at the outside just like Peter's. In her blue woolly dressing-gown, Bunny hunched on the foot of Ruth's bed, her arms round her ankles. Her dark hair went smoothly back into the fat braids. Ruth's heart felt as if something squeezed it, quickly, and as quickly let it go.

Peter, with a fine-flung gesture, bowed to make-believe applause. Bunny took her cue, let go her ankles, clapped once, lost her balance and toppled over, giggling. "You see!" said Peter, poking the blue bundle on the bed in a ticklish spot. "Going to mow 'em down!"

"Peter," said Ruth in fright and curiosity, "do you know what you're going to say?"

"Oh, sure, I know what I'm going to say, in a way. I don't know how I'm going to put it, if that's what you mean."

"Oh, Peter!" She sucked in breath. She didn't understand how anyone could do such a thing as make a speech. Something made her heart jump at the mere thought of it.

"Don't get me wrong," said Peter. "I'm terrified." She knew he was. She knew he'd make the speech, nevertheless, and do it well. She knew, too, that her own tense partisanship was helpful.

"... time is it, honey?"

"Quarter past six." Their eyes met, briefly. Hers with a flick of worry. His with that quick dark reassurance.

He picked up his dress shirt. "Which one of you two dames wants to button me up?"

"Me!" squealed Bunny. "Daddy, why does your shirt pretend it buttons in the front when it buttons at the back?"

"Civilization. Tradition in the front. Business at the back. How you doing?"

"O.K.," said Bunny with a puff of effort.

Business, thought Ruth darkly. "Peter," she said, "I hope you know what I think of your sister, Betty!"

"I couldn't print it," he answered promptly.

"Business," said Ruth as darkly as she felt. "Her and her important business appointment! On a Saturday night! I think she's got a heavy date."

Ruth heard again Betty's high and somewhat affected voice on the phone. "... Terribly sorry, darling. Of course, if you simply can't get

anyone, I'll cut this thing and I *will* come. . . . But I thought perhaps, if you *could* . . . ?"

Important! What kind of business appointment could be so important for Betty Jones, here in New York six months, with her job that paid what? fifty dollars a week?

For years, now, Ruth had resented her sister-in-law's manner that assumed, so ignorantly and unjustly, that Ruth was done for. Oh, Ruth was buried with the rank and file, and the drab stones all said Housewife.

"We'll try, Betty," Ruth had said coldly, and hung up.

But Peter had arranged it. By some hocus-pocus, he had fared forth into the halls and passages of the hotel, and he had arranged it. And Ruth had called Betty back and said, coolly, "Don't bother. . . ."

"But how could she welsh like that," murmured Ruth, "when she knows . . ."

"Hold still, Daddy."

"Excuse it, pet. Look, Ruthie. Sis takes herself awful hard as the career girl. You know that. Besides, I don't suppose she thinks this convention amounts to much. C rn-fed gathering of country editors. Provincial, hm?"

"There you are!" said Ruth indignantly. "There *you* sit, seeing *her* point of view. But can she see ours? It was all arranged weeks ago. What if we couldn't have got anybody?"

"She did say she'd come if she must. No use to be bitter."

Ruth blinked, because he was right . . . no use to be bitter. She kicked off her mules and bent to reach for her evening shoes. "Oh, dem golden slippers. . . ." whistled Peter, and Ruth saw Bunny's solemn eyes peep round his shoulder.

"Some day," said Peter, with his dark eyes glowing, "do you know, girls, who's going to be putting on her golden slippers to go to the ball?"

"Bunny O. Jones," said Ruth at once.

"And who's going to be sitting with their bedroom slippers on, watching her?"

"You and me," Ruth said. Their eyes met, smiled.

Bunny said, in a practical voice, "Is my sitter coming soon?"

Peter pinched her toes in their furry slippers. "Pretty soon. And you're going to go to sleep in your room with two beds, one for each pigtail. And what do you do in the morning?"

"Telephone room service," said Bunny.

"And say?"

"This is Miss Bunny O. Jones. I want my breakfast, please."

"In room . . . ?"

"Room 809. And if they don't know what I'm talking about, I'll say, 'My Daddy, Mr. Peter O. Jones, ordered it last night.'"

"And when the man knocks on the door?"

"I'll unlock the door and run quick back in my bed."

"That's right. The key's in your door. And then they'll bring in the wagon."

"Daddy, it isn't a real wagon."

"No horses, I'll admit. A mere pushing type of wagon. And on it's going to be a whole bunch of silver dishes and your orange juice sitting in the biggest mess of cracked ice you ever saw, enough to make about four snowballs. And you'll eat your breakfast, putting on as much sugar and cream as you want."

"And tomorrow's the day," Ruth said, "you're going to the magic eating store."

"I don't bleeve it!" said Bunny, but her face was rippling.

"Oh, you don't, Miss Bunny O. Jones? Well, you'll see!"

They all three had the middle initial O. Ruth's name had been Olsen, and Peter was delighted with the coincidence. People named Jones, claimed he, had to do something.

"Quite a lot like a zoo," Peter was explaining. "A whole bunch of little glass cages and in one there's a hot meat pie, and in another there's a big fat salad, and all you do is put in your money."

"Peter," said Ruth suddenly, "do you believe in the lift-man? Do you believe in his niece? Is she coming?"

"Certainly," said Peter. "Why would he say so?"

"I don't know. . . ." For Ruth, the room was rocking. The bright box it was had become dream-like. And the city over which it hung was fabulous and all its denizens were phantoms.

"Said she'd be glad to," Peter was saying. "First, I spoke to that coloured woman, the one who was so friendly. But she's engaged. So this Eddie overheard us and he offered. Imagine, hon. This Eddie's been running the same lift for fourteen years. You know which one he is, don't you?"

"I guess . . ."

"Lives up in the Bronx. No children, he told me. This girl, now . . . he and his wife seem to have taken her in out of the goodness of their hearts since his brother died." Peter sucked his cheek. "Fourteen years, up and down. And he still runs that lift as if his heart was in it. Wonder what he gets a week?"

Ruth sighed. Her momentary feeling that it was all myth was blown away. The little man who ran the lift was real, of course . . . a human being, with a life, a wife, a budget . . . with brothers and sisters like everybody else and a niece to oblige. It was just like home. You needed somebody. You asked around. It was just like asking the Johnstones who might say all their sitters were busy but they knew someone who knew somebody.

"The niece comes from the Middle West somewhere," Peter was saying. Experienced he says I suppose a little extra means something in a set up like that."

Ruth thought, all at once, that it was better to be paying someone than taking such a one as Letty's time for nothing. She smiled and reached out her hand.

"Oh, boy," said her husband, "comes the twelve-dollar smell!"

"Twelve dollars and fifty cents, don't forget!"

Ruth took the tiny stopper out, touched her shoulders with the precious stuff.

Peter bent over and sniffed violently. He said in her ear, "Would a couple of symmetrical tooth marks look good?" She saw herself laughing, in the glass.

". . . me smell," demanded Bunny.

So Ruth crossed with her pretty petticoat swirling, turned the plump little paw, touched the back of it with the perfume. "Delectious!" said Bunny, sniffing violently.

Ruth looked down at the white clean parting in the dark hair. All of a sudden, she saw their two connecting rooms, the two bright boxes suspended above the boiling city. And the rising noise surrounded them like smoke . . . the honks, clangs, shouts and murmurs, the sound and fury . . . and her heart was squeezed again. We couldn't have left her two thousand miles away . . . but we shouldn't have brought her . . . but we couldn't have left her. . . .

THE Hotel Majestic was neither large nor small, neither cheap nor costly. Not the last word, it wasn't dowdy, either. It was conservative. Even the lifts, although they ran smoothly, did so with a modest speed.

Eddie Munro stopped for a light at the eighth floor. A young man got in, turned at once to face the door. They sank downward in silence.

Out of the corners of their eyes, they typed each other, quickly. Eddie saw the easy grace of a tall body, the arrogant carriage of the high head. The sharp cut of the good-looking face, the cool grey eyes, long-lashed and asking for nothing. A type. One of those young men who had come out of the late war with that drive, that cutting quality, as if they had shucked off human uncertainties and were aimed and hurtling towards something in the future about which they seemed very sure.

His name was Jed Towers. It was his last night in New York. He had a dinner date.

If he saw the little man out of the corner of his cool eye, it was just a little man, with his shoulders pulled back from his narrow chest in a frozen strut. With a grey tace. With pale hair that never had any colour to lose, lying long and lank over the bald part.

The lift stopped smoothly at the main floor and Jed walked quickly to the street.

Eddie ran a nervous glance round the quiet lobby. He said to the next liftman, "Gotta make a phone call. Watch it, will you?" He scuttled round a bend of wall with his money in his hand.

"Marie?"

"Yeah, Eddie?" said his wife's placid voice.

"She leave?"

"She went, yeah, sure."

"How long ago?"

"In plenty of time," his wife said. Everything she said carried the overtone, Don't worry, Eddie.

"Listen, Marie, I think maybe I oughta stay about after I'm off. Folks might be late. Some kind of big party, the man said. O.K.?"

"O.K."

"You do think the whole idea's a good idea, Marie? She can earn a little money? You know? Get started?"

"Sure it is, Eddie."

"She—uh—liked the idea, didn't she?"

"Sure she did."

"Well . . . uh. . . ." He didn't want to let go of the line, leading to Marie and her voice saying, Sure.

"Say, Eddie, I think maybe I'll go to the show. Miz Martin said she'd go with me." Eddie squirmed in the booth, blinking rapidly. His wife's voice went on. "That picture we didn't think we'd better take *her* to. You know?"

"Yeah. Sure."

"Don't worry, Eddie," Marie soothed. "I'll be home long before you and Nell, probably."

"Sure. Sure," he said. He heard his wife's tiny sigh whispering on the line. "Go ahead," he said. "Have a good time."

"It'll be O.K.," she told him. (Don't worry, Eddie.)

He went round the wall to his lift. His eyes searched towards the revolving door, across the depth of the lobby. He threw back his shoulders, trying to stand erect, as if he were perfectly sure.

IN 807, Ruth slipped the rose-coloured frivolity off its hanger and expertly lowered it past her shining hair.

"Something like a princess," said Peter judiciously to the audience, "don't you think?"

"Zactly," said the audience solemnly.

Ruth kissed the back of the audience's neck. "And now!"

"Ah *ha!*" Peter took up his ridiculous garment, wiggled into it and patted the flying front sections.

"You said it was *tails!*" said the audience in high sweet scorn.

"You don't think so?" said Peter. He put both hands under the coat at the back and suddenly he was marching up and down with a Groucho Marx kind of crouch in his knees and his tails were flapping.

The audience was convulsed. Bunny wasn't, thought Ruth, a pretty little girl, but how beautiful she was, laughing!

And she herself gasped, "Peter, oh, stop!"

"O. Jones."

"Oh, stop! I'll ruin my mascara. Oh, *my!*"

Somebody knocked gently on the door.

Something squeezed Ruth's heart, quickly, and as quickly let it go, so that it staggered.

MISCHIEF

CHAPTER 2

"**M**R. JONES, here we are, sir." Eddie's bright blinking eye, the thrust of his neck, were as of a mouse at the door.

"Oh, yes, Eddie. Right on time. How-de-do. Come in."

"This here's my niece, Nell Munro. Nell?" Eddie came in, too.

"How-de-do, Nell," Peter said. Ruth moved towards them. All the fizz had gone out of the room.

"Good evening, Nell," she said. "It was nice of you to come at such short notice. Had you very far?"

"Don't take long," Eddie said. His Adam's apple jumped. He stood with his skinny shoulders thrust well back. "Really don't take long at all."

The girl, Nell, said nothing. She seemed to be nineteen or twenty. She stood demurely with her ankles tight together. Her shoes were shabby black pumps with medium heels. Her head was bent, her lashes lowered. Her hair was the colour of a lion's hide, but short, not very curly. She wore no hat, a navy-blue coat of a conservative cut and a little too big for her. Her hands were folded on a black handbag and Ruth was pleased to see that the nails were bare. Then she hooted at herself for so quaint a connecting of character with nail polish, for, after all, her own nails were a glossy rose. Still . . .

"Won't you take your coat off, Nell?"

Eddie said, "Take your coat off, Nell. Go ahead." The girl wore a neat dark silk dress. She held the coat on her arm as if she didn't know what to do with it.

"Just put it here, won't you?" purred Ruth. "And your bag, too? I suppose you've sat with children before, Nell?"

"She did, back in Indiana," said Eddie. "Did it a lot. Not round here, so much. She only came east about six months ago."

"And do you like it here, Nell?"

"She likes ~~it~~ fine," said Eddie. "We've got room in the apartment, plenty of room for her. My wife's real glad to have her."

Is the girl mute? Ruth wondered. Eddie's interposing chatter was nervous, as if it covered something lumpish and obstinate in the girl, who was not helping.

Eddie said, "What I wannida say, I'll *be* here in the hotel. I mean, I'm going to be about, see? So if you folks are going to be late, you don't need to worry."

"We may not be so very late," said Peter smoothly.

"What I mean," Eddie blinked, "I can take Nell home, see?"

Peter looked up, drawled, "That's nice of you." Ruth heard his surprised pleasure. "But I'd have seen her home, of course," said Peter virtuously.

Ruth thought the pupils moved under the lowered lashes in that bent face. She said brightly, "Bunny, dear Nell, this is Bunny and Bunny, this is Nell."

"Hello," said Bunny.

"Hello," the girl said. Her voice was low and colourless, but at least it worked. She spoke.

"My father and Eddie was saying, 'took a notion to go to the show so I might's well worry about ' Swallowing made a commotion in his skinny neck. "We was thinking it might be a real nice idea for Nell. There's a lot of guests bring their children. And me being right here, why, it ought to work out good."

An anxious little man, the kind who keeps explaining himself, although nobody cares. The conscientious kind.

"Suppose we show Nell your room, Bun?" Ruth led them. "You see, this door can be left a little bit ajar because Bunny does like to go to sleep in the dark. I thought *you* could sit in here, Nell, in our room, where you can be more comfortable."

Bunny had marched ahead of them into 809. Now she threw one leg possessively over the edge of one of the beds, the one on which her stuffed dog from home was already established.

"Perhaps she ought to turn in quite soon now," Ruth said gently. "She's had a pretty exciting day. Perhaps you'd read her a story? If you don't mind?"

"No, ma'am," said Nell passively.

"That'll be nice, won't it, Bun?" It was like pushing, pushing something heavy. Ruth said with a bright smile, "Suppose you see if Nell would like some sweets."

Bunny got the box and offered it. Nell said, "Thanks a lot." And snatched.

Ruth felt her heart lighten. That held some understanding. No grown person could care that much for sweets. That greedy quickness must have been exaggerated for the child's sake.

"You're welcome." Bunny dipped in herself, companionably.

Ruth felt easier.

"Bunny's such a big girl," she went on, "there really won't be anything to *do*." She realized that Eddie's voice and Peter's monosyllables were still going on behind her. "Bunny's bathroom is over there. And this door," she waved at the exit from 809 to the corridor, "is locked. Now, Bunny's to have one more sweet and then she's to brush her teeth and have her story and by that time I expect she'll be pretty sleepy." She looked back through the connecting door.

Eddie's high voice said clearly, "Well—uh—probably I'll look in on Nell, once in a while, if that's all right with you."

"Surely." Peter picked up his wallet. "Well—uh—thanks very much."

"No, sir." Eddie backed away from the dollar bill. "No, I'm glad to do it, sir. It's such a good idea for Nell. You just pay her what she earns. Fifty cents an hour. And that'll be fine. That's the arrangement. Nell's mighty glad to have a chance to earn a little something." He looked rather defiantly past Peter. "You folks go on out and have a good evening, now."

"Thanks very much, Mr. Munro. Good night."

"Good night. Uh—good night. Have a good time now, Mr. and Mrs. Jones." His hand hovered in a kind of admonishing gesture. It fell. At last, he was gone.

"O.K., Ruth?" said Peter with a touch of impatience.

"In a minute. Nell?" Summoned, the girl moved. Ruth could hear Bunny making a great splutter, brushing her teeth. "Peter, do you mind looking up the number where we can be reached? We'll just leave it by the phone in here, Nell, and if there is anything at all, why, you *can* call us."

Nell said, "Yes, ma'am."

Ruth began to turn off lights in 807, leaving only the standard lamp over the big maroon chair and the little lamp between the beds. "That's enough, Nell?" The girl nodded. "If you get drowsy, just lie down in here. I'm sure that will be all right. And." she lowered her voice dis-

creetly, "perhaps you had better use this bathroom. Now, is there anything I've forgotten?"

She stood in all her finery, her brow creased just a little, feeling unsatisfied. The girl had said so little. Yet, what was there for her to say? Something, thought Ruth impatiently, some little thing volunteered . . . *anything* to show she's taking hold! "Can *you* think of anything else?" she prodded.

The girl's head was not so bent, any more. Her face was wide at the eyes with high cheekbones, her eyes large and a trifle aslant. Her chin was small and pointed and her mouth was tiny.

She wasn't bad looking, Ruth thought with surprise. In fact, she might have been stunning, in an odd provocative way. Even her figure was good under that ill-fitting dress, now that she was standing more erect, not so meekly bent. The eyes were blue. There was too much blue in them, as the seeing centre were too small, the band of colour wider than it needed to be.

"I guess you've thought of everything," Nell said. The tiny mouth seemed to let itself go into a reluctant, a grudging smile.

For just a flash, Ruth wondered if, in that perfectly flat sentence, there were some mischief lying low.

"Better get going," Peter moved, full of energy. "There's the number, Nell, on this paper. Ask them to page us. Doubt if you'll need it. *We* may call up, so if the phone rings . . ." The whole world, for Ruth, seemed to take up where it had left off.

Bunny was curled round the jamb of the connecting door, toothpaste lingering on her lips. "Pop into bed, baby," Ruth said. "And Nell will read to you a while."

Herself in shadow, she watched them obey . . . Bunny peel out of her dressing gown, climb in and pull the bedclothes up, toss her pigtails behind . . . watched the girl move nearer and seat herself on the edge of the bed, where the light haloed her hair.

Suddenly, Bunny took charge. "Read me about Jenny and the Twins." She pitched her book at the girl.

"O.K.," said Nell, meekly.

Ruth turned away. She bustled, putting things into her evening bag, her wrist watch, her compact, handkerchief, hairpins, lipstick. Her heart was beating a little fast.

Peter was standing silently, with his overcoat on, with her velvet wrap over his arm. She went over and he held it. She looked up at him, wordlessly asked, Is it all right? Wordlessly, he answered, Sure. What can happen?

"Eddie's got his eye on them," said Peter in her ear. And she saw, at once, that this was true. Eddie was responsible. Eddie had worked here fourteen years. He couldn't risk losing that record. No. And Eddie was conscientious to a fault.

"Take us a while to get across town," said Peter aloud. Together, they went into the other room.

The girl was reading. Her voice was low and monotonous. She read like a child.

"All cosy?" said Ruth lightly. "Night, Bunny." Her light kiss skidded on the warm little brow.

Peter said, "So long, honey bun."

"So long, Daddy. Make a good speech."

Oh, bless her heart! thought her mother. Oh, bless her!

"I'll see what I can do, sweetheart," said Peter tenderly.

The girl sat on the edge of the bed with her finger on her place in the storybook. She watched them go.

As they crossed room 807, Ruth heard her voice begin again, ploddingly.

Not all of Ruth went through the door. Part remained and tasted the flat, the dim, the silent place from which she had gone. After all the lights and the love and the laughter, how was it for Bunny? Hadn't all the fun too abruptly departed? A part of Ruth lay, in advance of time, in the strange dark. Heard the strange city snarling below. Knew only a stranger's hired meekness was near when something in the night should cry. . . .

Peter put his finger on her velvet shoulder. A lift was coming. (Not Eddie's, and Ruth was glad. Not again did she wish to hear, "Have a good time, you folks. Have a good time.")

She shook at her thoughts. She knew what Peter wanted. By her will, she pulled herself together. (Bunny was nine. Bunny would sleep.) She drew the tardy part of herself in towards her body until she was all there, standing by the lifts.

It was The Night. At last, it was!

CHAPTER 3

JED TOWERS picked up his date at her family's apartment on East 36th Street. Her name was Lyn Lesley and she was more than just a date. She had achieved a certain ascendancy on Jed's list. In fact, she was on top. Lyn was slim and dark, with a way of looking out of the corners of her eyes that was neither sly nor flirtatious but simply merry.

He'd known her a year or more, but not until these two weeks, all free time, between jobs, had he seen her so constantly. This had happened easily. Very smooth and easy to slide from "see you tomorrow, question mark" to "see you tomorrow, period" to "what shall we do tomorrow?" But this next morning, Jed was off to the West where he'd be pinned down for a while, in the new job. Tonight, their last night, had accumulated without any deliberation on Jed's part the feeling of being decisive. Maybe it wasn't their last night together—but their last night apart. He wasn't stalling. He just didn't know.

They were not in evening clothes. Lyn wore a fuzzy blue coat with big pockets and big buttons and a little blue cap on the back of her head. They decided to walk. They didn't know where they were going, anyway. The mood was tentative and merry . . . no tinge of farewell in it, yet. Lyn hopped and skipped until Jed shortened his stride.

On 39th Street, the block west of Fifth, a beggar accosted them, whining to the girl, "Help an old man, missus?"

"Oh . . . Jed?" She stood still, impelled to compassion, her face turned up confidently.

Jed's fingers bit her arm. "Sorry. . . ." He dragged her along. "Just a racket," he said in her ear. The man's muttering faded in their wake.

She was really dragging her feet. "How do you know?"

"Know what?" He was surprised. "Oh, Lyn, grow up! That old beetle probably's got more in the bank than we'll ever see."

"You can't know that," she said stubbornly.

He stopped walking, astonished. Vaguely, he realized that his brusque decision might have broken something in her mood, some enchantment maybe. He had no patience with it. He said, "Now, look. Of course I can't know it, but the chances are I'm right. And I don't like being taken for a sucker. Now, skip it, shall we?"

She walked along only somewhat more willingly. He said teasingly, "But you'd have fallen for it, eh? Softie!"

"On the chance he really needed help," she said in a low voice, "I'd have risked a quarter."

"Don't be like that." Jed laughed at her. "Sentimental Sue!" He wheeled her into a restaurant. "This all right?" He was sorry the mood had been broken. It was his instinct to change the setting, and use the difference and food and drink to bring back whatever it was between them.

They took their table and Jed ordered dinner. Lyn had her lower lip in her teeth, kept her eyes down. When their cocktails came and he lifted his glass to her, she smiled. She said, "I'm not sentimental, Jed. It isn't that."

"No?" He wished she'd skip it. He was finished with that trivial moment. "Drink your drink, honey." He smiled at her.

But Lyn said, wanly, "You have an awfully quick way of mistrusting people." Her voice was gentle but he thought there were stormy signs in her eyes and anger stirred in Jed's own.

He said, evenly, gently, "I didn't think you were that childish."

"I can't see," she said, "how it would have hurt. Two bits. Or even a dime."

"Spare a dime," he mocked. "For Lord's sake, Lyn, let's not fight about it."

"No." She pushed her glass to and fro on the cloth and she smiled. "But you do expect the worst of people, don't you, Jed?"

"Certainly," he grinned. "You damn well better, as far as I can see."

She looked across the room. "I don't think I care for cheap cynicism," she said.

"Cheap!" he exploded. Women were the limit! He realized he must have hurt her, somehow. But he also knew he hadn't meant to. "For Lord's sake," he said, "that's about the most expensive piece of education I ever got myself. I'd hate to tell you what I had to pay for it."

"You don't believe . . ." she began, her lips trembling.

"Don't believe!" he scoffed. "Listen—aw, you baby? What I believe or what you believe makes no particular difference to the way things are. This is a pretty stinking lousy world."

"Is it?" said Lyn.

He was annoyed. "If you haven't noticed that, you're unintelligent," he said crisply.

"And what do you do about it?"

"Mind your own business. Take care of yourself."

"If everybody thought the way you do . . ." she began.

"You like the boy-scout type?" he challenged. "The sunshine kids?"

"No."

"The dreamy boys? The old stars in the eyes?"

"Stop it!"

"O.K.," he said. "So I'm not going to water myself down and play pat-a-cake with you."

"I don't want you to," she said. "I'm interested in what you think about things." Her voice was low again.

"But you don't think much of my way of thinking?" he said, more challenging than he had intended to be. "Is that it?"

She turned her hand.

"Well, . . ." he shrugged. "I'm sorry, honey, but one thing that stinks high in this lousy world is the lip service to sweetness and light. Look, I didn't expect an inquiry into my philosophy of life. I thought this was a date . . . you know, for fun?"

Her lips parted. He read in her look that they both knew it wasn't just a date . . . for fun. But she didn't speak.

"Show?" he said lightly. If they went to a show, it would deny, somehow, their ability to be together. He felt that, suddenly.

She said, "In such a lousy world, what do you expect?"

"Oh, say, the love of a good woman," he answered lightly. And then he was sorry. He saw her lips tighten. He'd hurt her again, when all he wanted was to get lightly off the subject. "Aw, Lyn, please. . . ." He put his hand on hers.

"Please," she said, not smiling. But he thought if he could kiss her, hard, right now, it would be a fine thing.

BUNNY listened politely to the story. When Mommy read, the story seemed more interesting. When Daddy read to her, it was interesting, too, although Daddy never did finish a story. He always got off to explaining something, and the explaining turned out to be *another* story.

She sat quietly against her pillow, her stuffed dog under her arm, until the voice stopped. Nell looked at her then. "I better go to sleep, now," said Bunny.

"O.K." Nell stood up.

"I can turn off my light," said Bunny kindly.

"O.K., then," Nell said. She put the book down on the other bed. She walked away. She picked up the sweet box, looked once over her shoulder and went through the door.

Bunny snapped off the light, watched the pattern of shadows establish itself. She wondered if the window was open. Nell hadn't looked to see. The room felt stuffy and dusty hot. Bunny wasn't quite sure she knew how to work the Venetian blind. She lay still quite a long time, then sneaked her feet out and felt the bristles of the carpet. She fumbled with the thin ropes and after a while there was a soft rattle and the slats changed. Now, she could see. The window *was* open. It was all right, then. Bunny crept back under the blankets. The air smelled dusty, just the same, and the pillow didn't smell like her pillow at home, either. Bunny pushed her nose into it and lay still.

NELL set the communicating door at an angle that almost closed it. Then she stood absolutely still, tipping her head as if to listen. Room 809 was quiet, behind her. Her eyes shifted. The big lamp flooded the spot near the windows where the big chair stood. The small lamp touched the upper ends of the twin beds. Elsewhere there were shadows.

Nell put the sweet box down on a bed and walked back with a silent, gliding step to the windows and opened the slats of the blind. The court was too narrow to see very far up or down. Opposite, there was only one lighted window. The blind, there, was up a third of the way, and she could see the middle section of a woman, seated at the desk. A black-and-white belt marked a thick waist on a black dress. There was nothing else to see.

Nell pivoted, glided in the same step to the middle of room 807 and stood still. She did not stand still long. Although her feet remained in the same flower of the carpet pattern, they began to dance. The heels lifted and fell fractions of an inch, only, as her weight shifted. Her hips rolled softly, and her shoulders and her forearms. Her fingers were the most active part of her body in this dance. They made noiseless snaps

and quick restless writhings of their own. Meanwhile, Nell's eyes, wide-open, darted as she danced, very alive and alert.

In a little while the feet danced daintily, in the tiniest of steps, off the one flower. Nell swooped over Peter's suitcase. Her hand scooped through its contents. Handkerchiefs and ties flew like sand from a beach castle. There were some letters and a manila folder flat on the bottom. The girl snatched them out, opened the folder awkwardly, and all the papers slid out in a limp curve. She stood with the empty folder in her hands and looked down at the spilled papers in the suitcase. Then she yanked the letters from the clip that held them to the folder. They didn't interest her for long. She dropped all the paper out of her hands, as if it were merely paper, with no other meaning. With one finger she flipped the lid of the suitcase shut.

She made three long steps and pivoted with one leg out like a dancer's, pulling "slowly round. She sat down, with an effect of landing there by sheer accident, on the bench in front of the dressing-table. She rummaged in Ruth's box of jewellery. There were three bracelets and Nell clasped them all on her left arm. There were two brooches and she pinned one above the other on the left lapel of her dress. There were a string of coral coloured beads, and Ruth's three strand pearls, and a silver locket on a silver chain. All these Nell took up and fastened round her neck. A pair of tiny turquoise and silver ear-rings that matched one of the pins she put on her ears. She looked at herself in the shadowy glass, solemnly, lumpishly. She smiled. Slowly, she began to take everything off again. As she removed each piece she did not return it to its place in the box. When the table top was scattered with most of the things, Nell seemed to lose interest. She still wore the ear-rings.

She turned, very slowly, moving her legs as if they were in one piece. She kicked off her black pumps. Ruth's aquamarine mules with the maribou cuffs were standing neatly under the dressing-table. Nell put her feet into them. She rose and walked up and down in them, watching her feet, acquiring more and more skill and arrogance in the ankles and the arches. At last, she seemed almost strutting.

Then she sat down on the bench again and picked up Ruth's perfume. She tipped the bottle on her forefinger and dabbed the forefinger behind her ears. She held the forefinger under her nostrils and inhaled dreamily, swaying to and fro as if she tantalized her own senses in a dreamy

rhythm. The little bottle dropped out of her left hand, cracked on the table top, lay on its side. The liquid began to seep out among the jewellery. (The twelve dollars that had been Peter's the fifty cents that had been Bunny's, last Mother's Day.)

Nell noticed it, finally. Her face did not change. She picked up Ruth's hairbrush, dipped it, making a smearing motion, in the spilled perfume, and began to brush her tawny hair. She brushed it sharply back from her ears. Now her face took on another look. Now the shape of it, the sharp taper to the chin, the subtle slant of the eye sockets, became older, more sleek. She drew the hairbrush once round her throat.

She rose and walked between the beds, turned, and let herself fall supine on the one to the left of the telephone. After a little while she lifted her right arm, languidly, letting her hand dangle from the wrist.

Then she sat up, propped her back with pillows and opened the fat phone book. She opened it almost at the centre and looked at the pages with unfocused eyes. She lifted her left hand and dropped it on the fine print. Where her left forefinger nail fell she gouged a nick in the paper.

She picked up the phone with her right hand, asked the girl at the switchboard sweetly for the number.

"Yes?" A man's voice came out of the city, somewhere.

"Guess who?" Nell said in a soft high soprano.

"Margaret, where are——"

"Oh-ho, no! Not Margaret!"

"Who is this?" said the voice irritably.

"By the way, who *is* Margaret? Hmmm?"

"Margaret is my wife," said the voice stiffly. "Who is this?"

"Virginia," crooned Nell. "Don't you remember me?"

"I think you have the wrong number," the voice said, sounding very old and tired, and he hung up.

Nell sucked her cheeks in, turned pages, gave another number.

"Hello?" A woman this time.

"Hello. Oh, hello. Is Mr. Bennet there?"

"No, he's not. I'm sorry." Brightly, "This is *Mrs.* Bennet."

"Oh," said Nell without alarm. Her head tilted, listening.

"Can I take a message," the woman said, less cordially.

"Oh, dear," simpered Nell. "You see, this is Mr. Bennet's secretary. . . ."

"Mr. Bennet has no secretary that I know of."

"Oh," said Nell. "Oh, dear me! Are you sure?"

"Who is this?" The voice sounded as if the face were red.

"Just a friend. You know?"

"Will you give me your name, please?"

"Why, no," said Nell flatly and then she giggled.

The phone slammed shut at the other end. On Nell's face danced a look of delighted malice. She stretched. She called the girl downstairs again. "Long distance."

Rochelle Parker, at the switchboard, was efficient and indifferent. She dealt with the barrage of calls from 807 for a long time without much comment, even to herself. She got in on part of a wrangle between the long-distance operator and whoever was calling, up there, over the existence of an exchange in Chicago. The person upstairs used language, softly. It was as bad as Rochelle had ever heard over the telephone, and she'd heard some. And this was worse, sounding so hushed-like.

"Jeepers," said Rochelle to herself. She might say a word to Pat Perrin, the house detective. Probably they were drinking up there. People went on telephone jags sometimes.

She decided it was none of her business. What went over the telephone wasn't disturbing the sacred peace of the Hotel Majestic. And the telephone bill would be part of the hangover. "Oh, boy," she thought and grinned. Then 807 suddenly stopped calling.

The phone book had fallen off the bed. Nell rolled over on her stomach and looked at it, lying on the carpet.

She sat up, curling her legs under her. She yawned. She listened. Her rambling glance passed the half-open closet door and returned. . . .

CHAPTER 4

A TALL MAN looks best in tails, they say. Ruth thought that, although Peter O. Jones was not too terribly tall, he looked wonderful. Erect, compact, controlled, he walked beside her.

She saw herself, too, in the mirrored walls of the passage to the ballroom and she began to walk as if she were beautiful. For the frock was becoming, and in the soft light she even liked her nose. Maybe it did

turn up, as Peter insisted, against all evidence that it did. At least it had, as he said, the air of being *about* to turn up, any minute.

Her hand with the rosy nails pressed the black cloth of his left sleeve and Peter crossed his right arm over and touched her hand. They were following an usher towards the speakers' table and Ruth could see their path, opening, and the turning faces marked it as if flowers were being thrown under their feet.

Somebody stepped into their way, holding out his hand. "Peter O. Jones?" he said joyfully. "Want you to meet . . ." "Beg pardon, sir, but this is . . ." "How do you do?" "Mrs. Jones, ah . . ." They were in a cluster. Yet they were moving slowly, surely, towards the speakers' table. Ruth struggled to remain balanced, to lock names to faces. It was confusing! It was glorious!

JED AND LYN were still sitting in the restaurant. Coffee, brandy, more coffee and many cigarettes had gone by. They were caught in the need to settle something. Jed shared, now, Lyn's feeling that it was important. They were hanging on to their tempers.

They'd about finished, speaking awkwardly, obliquely for the most part.

"What I know," he said, "the Lord ain't Santa Claus. You got them mixed, honey."

"You don't believe in it at all," she said wearily.

"I don't nag myself about it." He shrugged.

"All I'm trying to say, Jed," she was making an effort to be sweet, "is just this. I'd have *liked* it if you had given that old man a coin. It would have been good for *us*."

"Aw, that's junk, Lyn. Pure junk."

"It isn't junk!"

His voice slipped. "It's ridiculous!"

Her eyes flashed. "I'm glad to know you think I'm ridiculous."

"Maybe it's a good idea to know these things," he agreed coldly. "You called me a cheap cynic, remember?"

"And perhaps you are," she said shortly, "just that."

"It's no chore of mine, Lyn," he fought to sound reasonable, "to contribute to the income of a perfect stranger."

"Suppose *you* needed food . . . or a place to . . ."

"Then, I go and beg from organized charities. I'll never expect a stranger on the street to shell out for me. Why should he? Why should he believe me?"

"It's not true! People have to believe. . . ."

"Why?"

"Why anything, then?" she blazed. "What are you living for?"

"How do I know? I didn't put me here. Of all the idiotic——"

"I think you'd better take me home. This isn't fun."

"Why should I take you home?" he said, smouldering. "Ask some kind stranger."

She stared. She said, "You're quite right. I do nothing for you. Or your ego. Do I? I'll be leaving now."

"Lyn. . ."

"Yes?" she said icily, half up, her coat on her shoulders.

"If you go."

"I know. We'll never meet again. Is that y?"

"That's it, I'm afraid."

"Jed, I don't want to. . . ."

"Then for Lord's sake," he said irritably, assuming it was all over, "sit down and stop talking like a little jackass."

Her sideways glance was not merry at all. "Good night."

He settled in the chair, took out a cigarette. "Got your mad money? Here." He threw a five dollar bill on the tablecloth.

Lyn's lips drew back from her teeth. He could feel, like a strong sudden gust, her impulse to hit him. Then he thought she'd cry. But she walked away.

He sat, staring at the messy table. Of all the stinking lousy dates he ever had in his life! Protectively, he thought of it as just a date. He was outraged. His last night in the East! Last date! And she walked out on him.

For what? He over-simplified! Because he didn't give that mangy old dead-beat a quarter. Of all the . . .! He sat there and let anger become a solid lump. After a while, he paid the bill and left. Outside, Lyn was nowhere about.

He began to walk, fast, hands dug in his coat pockets. He supposed gloomily it was a good thing he'd found out what kind of stuff passed for thought in her head. So . . . cross *her* off the list. Yeah. Couldn't she

see he hadn't tried to hurt her? Couldn't she concede he'd learned a few things, had a core of convictions that was, at least, honestly come by? No, she couldn't.

But Towers would have a date tonight, just the same. His little book (with the list) was at the hotel, damn it. He swung north. Hadn't thought he'd need it. But he *had* it. Towers would have a date his last night. Wouldn't be stood up, not he!

Jed slammed through the revolving door. It stuttered, not moving as fast as he. He stood smouldering at the desk, waiting for his key. He went up to the eighth floor, unlocked his door, put on his light, flung off his coat.

He stared round him, then dipped into his bag for that bottle of whisky. He could think of nobody on his list who'd do him good. Call any girl, this time of night, and you could hear her little brain buzzing. Oh, will I look unpopular if I admit I'm not busy? So she'd say she had a date. And he'd say, "Break it for me?" Knowing damn well she probably was just about to wash her hair or something. So, she'd "break it." Phoney. Everything was pretty phoney.

(Not Lyn. She was just too naïve to live.)

He looked at the phone. Call and apologize? But what was there to apologize for? He'd only said things he believed.

The blind across his bank of windows was not drawn. He realized that he stood as one on a lighted stage. It felt, too, as if eyes were upon him. Somebody was watching him.

He moved towards the windows that looked out on to a court.

He was looking directly across the narrow dark deep well into another lighted bank of windows. The other room hung there in the night like a lighted stage. The scene had no depth. It was lit by a lamp near the windows. There was a girl or a woman over there. She was dressed in some kind of flowing bluish or greenish thing. She seemed to be sitting *in* the window, probably on the flat top of the long radiator cover. Her neck was arched. She had short yellowish hair. She seemed to be looking down at a point on her right leg just above the knee. A garter or something? Her right foot rested on the radiator top. The nicely shaped leg was bent there, framed and exhibited.

She was not looking out, not looking at him. He was absolutely certain that she had been.

He knew he must be silhouetted in the frame of his own windows.

She moved her right palm slowly down the curve of her calf. Her head turned. She looked across at him. He did not move.

Her hand rested on her ankle. Her garment remained as it was, flowing away from the pretty knee. Her head was flung up from the neck. She looked at him.

There was something so perfectly blunt about the two of them, posed as they were, each in his bright box, suspended, aware. . . . It was as if a shouted *Well* crossed the court between them.

Jed felt himself grin. The anger that hummed in his veins changed pitch, went a fraction higher. What was this? and why not? he thought, pricked and interested.

CHAPTER 5

THE GIRL took her hand from her ankle, put both hands on the radiator top behind her, bent her body to lean back on the stiff support of both her arms, kept looking out at him. There was something direct about it that fitted with his mood.

Jed was reading the floor plan of the hotel that lay in his head. He felt pretty sure he knew what the number of that room must be. He put his bottle of whisky down and raised both hands where the shape of them would be silhouetted for her to see. He signalled with eight fingers, then with both hands bent in an O, and then with seven fingers.

Her head tilted as if to say, What do you mean?

He took up the bottle in his left hand, pointed at it, at her, at himself.

Her chin went high, as if her head fell back in laughter.

He put down the bottle, pantomimed himself at a telephone. She understood because her head turned and she looked behind her towards where the phone in that room must be.

She made the sign of seven.

Jed backed away from the window. He picked up his phone. He said to the girl, "807, please."

Downstairs, as Rochelle made the connection, a thought no clearer than the word "huh?" crossed her mind fleetingly. Pursuing it, she remembered. Oh, yeah, 807 was the whispering foulmouth. What now? Probably, she surmised, 821 was going to complain. She heard a man's

voice say, "Well?" It was blunt and a trifle mocking. It wasn't going to complain.

Jed could still see the girl, in the little puddle of light by the beds in there, answering her phone. He waved. "Hi," he said, over the wire. She made a sound like a chuckle. "Hello."

"*Would* you like a drink?"

"I might," she said.

"If I walk round, will you open the door?"

"I might."

"It's a long walk," he said.

He had the impression that she would have teased him, but something happened. He saw her head turn. She said, in a different mood and a different tempo, "Wait a few minutes?"

"This is an impulse," Jed said frankly. "It might not last."

"Five minutes," she said. "There's somebody at the door." Then softly she hung up.

Jed sat on the bed in his room. He saw her at the window, lowering the blind, but she opened the slats so that he could still see into the room. He knew when she went into the shadowy part, when she opened the door. The visitor came in far enough so that Jed could identify the hotel livery.

Bell-hop, or something. Oh, well. . . . He went into his bathroom, looked at himself in the glass. His anger was no longer so solid. It came and went, ebbed and flowed. But the pulse was strong, the beat was urgent. It seemed necessary to do something.

In 807, Eddie was saying, "Little girl went to sleep all right, did she? You all right, Nell?"

"Umhum," Nell murmured. She was in the maroon chair, looking relaxed. Her eyelids fell as if they were heavy.

"What you got on? Nell!" Eddie's voice was thin.

"I'm not hurting anything."

Eddie's flitting eye caught the top of the dressing-table and the condition it was in. His gold-flecked teeth bit over his pale lip. He moved closer to the dressing-table. After a while he said, in a low voice, "You shouldn't monkey with other people's stuff, Nell. Really, you shouldn't."

"I'm not hurting anything," she repeated and her voice was more truculent than before.

Eddie gnawed his lip. He rescued the perfume bottle and replaced the stopper. Almost furtively, his fingers began to neatenthe tumble of jewellery. He began to talk, softly.

"It's kind of an easy job, though, isn't it, Nell? Don't you think so. You like it, don't you, Nell?"

"Oh, sure," she said drowsily.

"Nell, you . . . better take off that negligée . . . and the slippers. Honest I don't think Mrs. Jones would like that."

"She won't know the difference," said Nell shortly.

"Well," said Eddie, "will you take them off, like a good girl?"

"Umhum," she murmured "Sure I will, Uncle Eddie." She lifted her eyes and smiled at him.

He was enormously encouraged and pleased "That's right," he cried. "That's good. You want to get more jobs like this. Don't you see, Nell? It'll be a real nice kind of little work for you. And you can do what you want with the money, after. You can buy some fancy slippers like those for *yourself*, Nell."

She turned her cheek to the chair.

Eddie wished he knew how it was Marie talked to her, what it was she did. Because Nell was good when Marie was about, real quiet and good.

"Tell you what I'll do," he said heartily. "When I get off duty, I'll bring you up a coke. O.K.? It won't seem so long. You'll be surprised how the time will go by."

"Sleepy," she murmured.

"Well," he said, bracing his shoulders, "nap a little bit. That's a good idea." He looked at the perfume bottle, now nearly empty. He said in a nervous rush, "And you ought to apologize for spilling the perfume . . . right away when she comes back."

Nell's lids went up slowly until her eyes were very wide. "It was an accident," she said an octave higher than before. Her whole body had tightened.

"I know. I know," said Eddie quickly. He stepped near her and put a gentle hand on her shoulder. She twisted away from it. "Of course it was an accident. I believe you, Nell. But it's a good idea to say so, before she notices. It'll be all right. You couldn't help it. Now, you just—just take it easy a little bit. I'll be back." He looked nervously behind him.

The open lift, standing too long on the eighth floor, was present in his consciousness. "I gotta go. But you're all right, aren't you?" He swallowed. "Please, Nell," he said in a thin pleading voice, "don't get into no more mischief with their things."

"I'm not doing anything," she said sullenly.

But, when he sighed and paused as if he would plead some more, she said quickly, "I'm sorry, Uncle Eddie. I'll put everything back. You know I get . . . restless." Her hands moved to the ear-rings. "I'll take them off."

Immediately, he was pleased. "Sure, I know you get restless. I know you don't mean anything. I want you to . . . kinda get used to this idea. We could work up a kind of a little business, here. If you'd just . . . If you like it."

"I do like it," she said, sounding thoughtful and serious.

The little man's face reddened with his delight. "Good girl! That's swell! I'll bring the cokes." And so he withdrew, pointed little face going last, like a mouse drawing back into its hole.

Nell waited for the door to close. She got slowly to her feet. Then they began to move on the carpet in that tiny dance. She listened. She went to the blind and it rattled up under her hands.

Jed was standing in the middle of his room, his weight even on both feet, looking rather belligerently across at her.

She flung up both hands in a beckoning gesture, until her arms were in a dancer's high curve, and she whirled backward from the window. Jed stood still. And the girl stood still, posed with her arms high, looking over her shoulder.

In a second, Jed put the bottle in his pocket, and his finger on his light switch. His light went out.

Nell pawed, disturbing the order Eddie had created, and she snatched at Ruth's spare coral lipstick.

CHAPTER 6

JED'S IMPULSE had been flickering like a candle in a draught. He put the bottle in his pocket for the necessary little drink that you take while you look the situation over, heard the lift gate closing. So he waited for the faint hum of its departure before he went round the

corner. His mood was cautious when he tapped on the door marked 807.

She was not very tall, not very old, not bad-looking, either. Her face, tilted to look at him, was a triangle and the eyes were set harlequin-wise. Jed's nostrils moved. She reeked . . . the whole room reeked . . . of perfume. She opened the door wider, quickly. He took a step and the door closed behind him as if she had fanned him into this perfumed place. His glance went rapidly round. He looked, and knew it, as if he were ready to take the step back again, and out.

"What's in the bottle?" she asked

He took it out of his pocket and showed her the label. He said, mechanically, "Too nice a night to drink alone "

Her blue eyes examined his. For a minute, he thought there wasn't going to be any act . . . and he was fascinated by that same sense of blunt encounter that he had felt before.

This wasn't a type he knew

He set the bottle on the desk and walked past it, going warily to the big maroon chair "Nice of you to let me come over," he said, perfunctorily. His eye caught certain signs and he was not pleased. He thought he had better get out of here as quickly as was graceful. It was obvious that this room was half a man's.

She walked over a bed on her knees and then was standing between the two of them with complete dignity. It was odd, almost as if she didn't notice how she had got there. She put her hands on the phone. "We must have some ice," she said grandly.

"Fine."

"Ginger ale?"

The name on that envelope caught in the hasp of the suitcase was Jones. "Whatever you like, Mrs. Jones," Jed said.

She was startled. Then her reddish lashes swept down. Into the phone she said, grandly, "Please send ice and ginger ale to Mrs. Jones in 807."

Jed guessed she was being some film star or other. But they'd cut a line out of the picture. She forgot to ask for room service. The operator obliged. Looking over Jed's head, posed like a model, the girl repeated her order with exactly the same inflections. It was mimicry all right.

But when she hung up, her whole face changed. "I'm not Mrs. Jones," she told him with sly delight. "Mrs. Jones went out."

Jed looked mildly interrogative.

"This isn't my room," she chuckled.

He thought to himself that this was no worse a dodge than any. "That's funny. The room over there isn't *my* room, either. Coincidence?" He leaned back, grinning.

"Mr. and Mrs. Jones went out," she said, frowning.

"The fellow whose room I was in went out, too," said Jed, still grinning. "He's got a date."

She sat down on the bed and stuffed a pillow behind her. "I'm going to South America tomorrow," she remarked lightly.

"Oh? What part?" She didn't answer. "I'm off to Europe, myself," he lied cheerfully.

"Mr. Jones is my brother," said the girl. "I hate him. I hate all my relatives. They won't let me do anything. They don't want me to have dates." She looked both dreamy and sullen. Jed began to believe some of this. Something was real about it.

"Shall we make it a date?" he suggested. "And go dancing?"

Her head jerked. He saw her quick desire to go and her recollection of some reason why not . . . "I haven't any evening clothes," she said, and he gawped at such an excuse. If excuse it was. "Mrs. Jones had a beautiful evening dress."

"Your . . . sister-in-law?"

"And a velvet wrap the colour of this." She touched the negligée. "You can't buy that for fifty cents an hour."

A rap on the door cut into Jed's puzzling. Boy with the ice. Jed got up and turned his back, looking out through the blind as if there was something to see. There was nothing to see but some old biddy writing letters over there.

"Sign, miss?" the boy was mumbling.

Jed turned round. "Better let me get it, honey." He fumbled for money. "What time did your brother go out?" he asked her.

She said nothing.

"Do *you* know?" Jed watched the boy's worldly young eyes. "Notice a couple in evening clothes?"

"Yeah, they left quite a long while ago."

"How long will they be?" Jed asked the girl.

She shrugged. "Some party . . ."



"Yeah? Well . . . ' Jed watched the boy whose eyes were first satisfied, then veiled. The boy took his tip and departed.

THE BOY, whose name was Jimmy Reese, went down the corridor jauntily, his lips pursed to whistle. Eddie's lift picked him up. They eyed each other with a kind of professional contempt. Jimmy's whistle went right on.

The guy in 807 belonged in 821. This Jimmy knew. Who that girl was, Jimmy did not know. So she was Jones's sister. For all he knew. He didn't know she had anything to do with Eddie.

Eddie didn't know that Jimmy had just been to 807. He'd listened at the eighth floor. He'd eyed the boy. All seemed quiet.

JED, mixing drinks, thought it over. He had established something. Mr. and Mrs. Jones *had* gone out. Who was this, then?

"You got a name?" he asked gently.

"Nell." She told him so absent-mindedly he believed it.

Nevertheless, he lied, saying, "I'm John." He handed her a glass, went over and saw to the blind. Then he sat down on the bed next to her. "Where you from, Nell?"

"California."

"What part?"

"All of it."

"You can't do that. California's too big. San Francisco?"

"Sometimes."

"Tulsa?" he said.

"There, too," she answered serenely.

"Where is Tulsa?" he asked, in sudden suspicion.

"In California." She looked surprised.

"Nell," he said amiably, "you're a liar."

"Oh, well," she said, suddenly soft as a kitten, leaning against his arm, "you're lying to me, too."

"I haven't said anything."

"You're lying, just the same."

He took her chin in his left hand, turned her face.

"Well?" he said, aloud. He bent his mouth to kiss her.

The taste of her lips was very close when a ripple went down his

spine. He turned Nell's quietly waiting face with his hand, pressing it to his shoulder. His neck worked stiffly, slowly. He looked behind.

There was a little girl with dark pigtails, barefooted, in pink pyjamas. She was watching them silently.

A wild animal could have startled him no more.

CHAPTER 7

THE SHOCK seemed to lift him into the air. He croaked, controlling his voice better than his reflexes, "Seems to be an audience." He had pushed Nell to her balance. He was suddenly sitting on the other bed, facing the child.

Jed, going about his business, brushed by the children in the world without making any contact. They didn't interest him. They were out of his orbit. It seemed a long time ago, if not in another planet, that he himself had been a child. Jed didn't know any children, as friends. He would have mentioned "a bunch of kids" as he would comment on a "flock of chickens" or a "hill of ants." He didn't individualize them. He simply had no truck with them.

This little girl, with her dark eyes in an angular face, wasn't a pretty little girl. Too thin. Too solemn.

Nell was in a crouch, leaning on her arms. "Get back in there," she said viciously.

"I want——"

Nell went across the bed on her knees. "Go on. Get back in there and go to sleep." Her fingers clawed the little shoulders.

Nobody spoke to Bunny O. Jones in such a fashion. Nobody handled her so cruelly. She began to cry.

"And shut up!" said Nell.

"Yours?" said Jed coolly.

"She belongs to the Joneses," said Nell angrily.

"Oh . . . your niece?"

Nell laughed.

"You've got my mommy's things on," wailed Bunny.

"Shut——"

"Just a minute." Jed rose. He came towards them. He was very tall next to Bunny O. Jones. He had no instinct to bend down. What's

your name?" He felt awkward, speaking to this mite, and was impelled to speak loudly as one does to a foreigner or someone who may not readily understand the language.

"I'm Bunny O. Jones." She twisted in Nell's harsh hands.

"Let go of her! Bunny *Jones*, eh? This isn't your aunt, is it?"

"She's my sitter," sobbed Bunny.

"Oh, for Lord's sake," Jed put his glass down angrily. Now he knew what he had got into.

"I don't like you," sobbed Bunny.

"I don't like you either, you damn little snoop," Nell said.

One did *not* speak to these strange little creatures in such terms. Jed felt this much out for himself. It came slowly to him with a sense of how big he was, how big and how powerful even Nell was, and how helpless was the child.

He said, "Nobody's going to hurt you, Bunny. Don't cry."

But she kept on crying. Perhaps she didn't believe him. He couldn't blame her for that. She was shrinking away from Nell. And Nell contrived to loom closer and closer, so that the child was menaced and pursued and sought to escape, although the chase was neither swift nor far, but done in tiny pulses of the foot on the carpet.

"Why don't you ask her what she wanted?" Jed said.

"She wanted to snoop," said Nell.

But it was clear to Jed that the little girl had done nothing in malice. He put his arm like a bar across Nell's path. "No," he insisted. "There was something. What was it, hm? Bunny? What did you want?"

"It's too hot," wept Bunny. "I want my radiator off."

"You might have asked," Jed said scornfully to Nell. "I'll take care of it." He strode through the communicating door. The other room was stuffy. He found a valve. He thought, Towers, fold your tent. He noticed the exit to the corridor from here, from 809, and the key in the lock.

But the crying child, the girl again pursuing her in that gliding stepless way, were in the room with him.

"It's O.K. now," Jed said. "Better get back to bed."

"*She'll* get back to bed."

Bunny broke and ran. She rolled into the bedclothes. She burrowed as if to hide. She was still crying.

Jed stalked into 807, making directly for the bottle. What a stinking evening! First one thing and then another! *Now* he understood that crack about fifty cents an hour . . . this late! He was furious for having been stupid. He was embarrassed and humiliated. He was even half angry with the little girl for having walked in and stared at Towers making a jackass of himself. A baby-sitter!

He wanted this Nell to know he was angry. So he freshened from the bottle the drink in the glass. As Nell, on his heels, entered 807 and closed the door firmly behind her, he snarled, "Were you going to pay me my two bits an hour? Or wasn't this a fifty-fifty proposition?"

"What?" she spoke as if she'd been preoccupied, as if she hadn't quite heard. Her face was serene. She touched her hair. It was as if, now that the door was closed, it might as well never have opened.

But Bunny was crying bitterly beyond the wall.

Jed said, *turning*, "Why didn't you tell me there was a kid in there?"

"I didn't know she was going to come in here," Nell said.

Jed looked at her. For the first time, something nudged him, something said the word inside his head. But he didn't believe it. The word is easy to say. It falls off the tongue. But it is not so easy to believe, soberly, in all reality.

She walked to where he stood, fitted herself into the hollow of his shoulder and turned up her face. She was back where she'd been when so rudely interrupted. She was waiting for them to take up where they had left off. Jed stood still, angry enough to throw her brutally away from him, but bitter enough to stand still in unresponsive contempt.

The little kid was crying, in there, a tearing, breaking—a terrible sound.

Nell's tawny head rested against him. He grabbed her shoulder. "Don't you hear that?" He shook her.

"Hmmm?" She was smiling. She enjoyed being shaken. So he let her go. Her eyes opened. "I heard you. I know what you said. You're angry with me. I don't see why you're angry with me, John. John! I haven't done anything."

"Well," Jed said. He put the stopper in the bottle of liquor and kept it in his hand. He was ready to go.

"Don't go," Nell said rather shrilly. "I haven't done anything. It's all right now, isn't it? She's gone."

"Gone!" The sound of the child, crying in the next room, was preying on Jed's nerve ends. As bad, he thought, as if a cat had been yowling under his window and he trying to sleep. It was too irregular even to be a background noise. It pierced. It carried you with it into its anguish. "Can't you hear that!"

"That? She'll go to sleep."

"She will?"

Nell shrugged. Using one hand, she lapped the long silk robe so that it didn't drag. "Can't I have another drink?"

The sounds the kid was making were not, Jed discovered, quite like a cat crying. He didn't know anything about kids. But you didn't need to know anything. Just listening told you. *This* sound of *this* crying had to stop. "Does it bother you?" the girl said casually.

"It bothers the hell out of me," Jed said roughly. "She's scared. Why did you have to jump at her like a wild-cat? *This* the way you always treat your customers?" He poured whisky into her glass, hardly aware he was doing so.

She looked sullen. "I didn't mean to scare her."

"But you knew she was in there. You're supposed to be taking care of her, aren't you? Listen, . . ."

He was listening, himself, all the time. The sound was intolerable. "You better get her to stop that."

"When she gets tired. . . ."

"You want the whole hotel up here?" he snapped.

"No." She looked alarmed.

"Then do something, I'm telling you."

"If I go in there, you'll sneak out," Nell said flatly. The thought was crossing Jed's mind as she spoke. He put the whisky down beside the phone. He took his hand off the bottle as if it were hot.

"I don't have to sneak out, you know," he said cuttingly. "I can walk out, just about any time."

"If she stops crying, will you stay?"

Jed was thinking how that little throat must ache. He growled, "Get her quiet. Get her happy. Go on."

"If I do?"

"If you do," he said rather desperately, "well . . . maybe we can have a quiet little drink before I go."

The girl turned, put down her glass, went to the door and opened it quietly. She vanished in the darkness.

"MR. TOWERS's room doesn't answer," Lyn said. "But you did see him come in a little while ago?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well . . ." she turned uncertainly.

"A message?" the desk clerk suggested politely. She was a smart girl, trim and cuddly in the bright blue coat with the big brass buttons. And she seemed distressed.

"Yes, I could leave a note."

He used a pencil to point the way to a writing-desk in the lobby, aiming it between a pillar and a palm.

"Yes, I see. Thank you." Lyn sat down at the desk. She shifted the chair slightly so that she could keep an eye on a spot anyone entering the Hotel Majestic from the street must pass.

She thought he must have gone out again, perhaps through the bar. She hoped he wasn't, **even now**, upsetting her family. This was something she had to work out **for herself**.

Anyhow, she didn't think **Jed** would go to her apartment. It would be capitulation. He wasn't **that** type. He was pretty proud.

Was she the type, then, to hang about? All right, she thought stubbornly, I *won't* be the huffy female type who, right or wrong, sits and waits for the male to come with his hat in his hand, like the dopey heroines of old romances.

Ah, nobody was a type! This was Jed and Lyn, and this had to be worked out on the basis that they were unique and alive, and it had to be worked out *now*. Tomorrow, the plane . . .

Wherever he was, he'd come back here. He hadn't checked out. It was all so childish. . . . She could at least say that much.

"Dear Jed," she wrote. "It was all so childish. . . ."

How could such bitter words have been spoken between them? Because she'd been riding a high romantic crest of expectation and been dragged rudely off it? Maybe, for him, there'd never been such a crest. No, no. She *had* known that Jed was fond of her. She'd had *reason* to expect him to say so or say more.

She tore up the sheet and wrote again, "Dear Jed: I've been trying to

find you because . . .” A tear fell and the ink blurred and she thought, Oh, no . . . not this! Wouldn’t he be amused!

Would he? Lyn sat a long time with her hands quiet on the desk. She worked it out. It was true. She was in love with Jed Towers . . . in love enough to lash out at him.

It was true. She had thought he might ask her to marry him tonight. They’d been together, together . . . until that old man touched this off.

And it was true. She’d have said “yes.” Gladly, yes.

And they had quarrelled. But it was *not* true that she thought him a cheap cynic. He was . . . wary. Yes, he was. And he talked cynically. Part of it was simple reporting—what he saw around him. Part of it was defensive: . . . or something like that. But it was talk.

So Lyn worked it out, painfully. It was also true, whoever began it, she had been the one to walk away and cut off communication, and she didn’t (she’d always *said*) believe in that.

She took up the pen. “Dear Jed: I can’t let you go——” But you can’t keep him, Lyn. He isn’t that type. Maybe he was only something charming and exciting flashing through your life. “Misunderstanding,” she wrote desperately. It was too late. She ought to go home.

What can I say? she wondered. What can I do? How can I go home?

GET out of here, Towers. Get out, quick. And forget it. Skip it. Jed paid his inner talk to himself no heed. He sat down on a bed. Under the verbalized thought ran uneasy pictures. What if the child were to cry a long time, and he, in his own room, could hear? How was he in a position to protest, to do anything about it? *He’d* been stupid. Nell, the baby-sitter, had already made a complete jackass out of Towers. He looked into his glass and contemplated this state of affairs.

When Nell came back carrying the child, he knew her reason. She didn’t trust him not to sneak away. He was not entirely displeased. He wanted to watch her quiet the child.

“If you’re scared, that’s silly. Nothing to be scared about,” Nell said impatiently. “Now don’t start to cry any more. Shall I read another story?”

“No,” said Bunny. She wasn’t quite crying at the moment, but she was shaken by an aftermath of shuddering. It was a reaction not subject to her control.

Nell set her down on her bare feet. Three strangely assorted people looked rather helplessly at each other.

"You know, *you* nearly scared the life out of me," Jed said in a friendly tone. "And Nell, too. That's why Nell was cross."

"She was . . . too . . . cross," said Bunny.

"That she was," he agreed grimly.

Nell looked as if she would flare up defensively, but she did not. "You O.K. now?" Her voice was edgy.

Bunny wasn't sure enough to say. Her eyes turned from one to the other.

"I'm a friend of Nell's, came in to see her a minute," Jed said, feeling his face flush. Why he should be trying to explain himself to this half-pint creature he didn't quite know. "You ought to be asleep, I guess. How old are you?"

"Nine.

Nine. What was it to be nine? Jed couldn't remember. The drinks were beginning to blur his concern a little.

"I'm too hot," said Bunny. "I'm all sticky."

"Come over here, then." Nell went to the windows. "We'll let some cool air blow on you. Then you'll be cooler. Then you can go back to sleep." She nodded wisely. She pulled up the blind, pushed up the sash.

Jed jumped quickly out of the line of vision through those windows. His back felt for the head-board. He poured another drink. The ice was all the way over there. So, no ice. Because he wouldn't cross in front of the windows. Place like a goldfish bowl. He knew. And that was where you made your mistake, Towers.

"See the lady, Bunny?"

Sob and shudder answered.

"I see a man, down there. He's playing cards."

Jed's warm drink was nauseating.

"I think," Nell went on, "there's a kitten under the table."

"What"—sob—"table?"

"Down there. The card table."

"I don't see . . ."

"Maybe it isn't a kitten. But it looks like a kitten."

"Is it grey?"

"Maybe."

MISS EVA BALLEW wrote, on the Hotel Majestic stationery, in her flowing script: “. . . seems to be a child crying in this hotel and I am so distracted, I hope you can understand what I am writing, since I seem to have two predicates and no subject in my previous sentence! My dear, this trip has really”

Her pen paused. The child had stopped crying. Thank goodness, she thought. But now the night seemed hollow. She ducked her head enough to glance briefly out, under her blind.

The pen resumed: “. . . been a treat for all us teachers to have visited so many historical sites here in the East. . . .” It was not a sentence.

She put down her pen suddenly and ducked again to look out, across the dark well of the inner court.

“I DON’T see any kitten,” Bunny said, “at all.”

“Well, you’re not looking,” Nell said softly. “But you won’t cry any more, will you?”

Jed glanced across at the bowl of ice. He rose. Why did she have to put the damn blind up? Dare he cross over? *Was* there anybody taking all this in?

When he turned his head over his shoulder, the question dropped out of his mind. He stood quite still, puzzling about what was wrong. It seemed to him, definitely, that something was wrong. Bunny was kneeling on that radiator top. And Nell sat there beside her. Nell’s hand was flat on the little rump in the pink sprigged muslin—

Her hand was flat!

And there was some wild throbbing in this room.

Miss Eva Ballew, peering out, exclaimed. Nobody heard her, for she was alone. “No!” she said. Then, whimpering. “Oh, no!”

THE BACK of Jed’s neck prickled. He began to move, silently.

“Way down under the table?” Bunny asked.

“Way down . . .” crooned Nell. “Way, way down. Are you going to be quiet, I wonder?”

Bunny screamed.

Jed, with his fingers tight round the little brown ankle, caught her forward pitch with one arm and said, on a rush of breath, “Excuse me. Shouldn’t lean out like that, for Lord’s sakes. I *had* to grab.”

Nell's face turned, tipped back and up. She looked drowsy and unstartled. "What?" she murmured. "What's the matter?"

Jed had the child. "Better come away," he said to her. He squeezed her as gently as he could manage. "I'm sorry, honey, if I scared you. Trouble is, you scared *me* again. Sure did. Awful long way down—kind of tough landing."

Bunny, having screamed once in her surprise, did not begin to cry. Her face was pale. Her big dark eyes seemed to turn and keep some wisdom of her own.

Jed said, "You're shivering. Aren't you sleepy now?"

Bunny nodded. She wiggled out of his arm, looked at him gravely. "I can go to bed myself," said Bunny O. Jones.

MISS BAYLEW straightened her cramped body. Her heart still lurched with that old devil of hers, that hair-trigger onset of the physical sickness of fear. She felt her throbbing throat. But what was going *on*, over there? Her pale lips tightened. She'd heard the man say, "Put that blind down!"

So, it was to be secret, and it was male, and it was, perhaps, evil? She focused on her letter. "And even in this wicked city," her pen wrote, at last, too shakily.

"Put that blind down!"

Nell was still sitting by the window, still looking dreamy. She stretched to obey and Jed thought there was something snake-like in the smooth uncoiling of her arching back.

He stood at the door of 809, through which Bunny had marched herself. 809 was quiet . . . dim and quiet in there. So he closed the door, gently.

BUNNY's rigid neck muscles let go a little. The head began to dent the pillow. The eyes were wide open. The hand reached for the little stuffed dog and tucked it under the stiff chin. The throat moved, against the fluffy toy, in a great and difficult swallow.

JED swung round. You're nuts, Towers, he said to himself, angrily, using the words in his mind to knock out the pictures. You must be

nuts. Where'd you get such a nutty idea? Nobody shoves kids out of eighth-storey windows so they won't cry any more! Made his hair curl, the mere idea, even now.

He began to fish ice out of the bowl.

It crossed his mind that there is something wild about total immersion in the present tense. What if the restraint of the future didn't exist? What if you never said to yourself, "I'd better not. I'll be in trouble if I do"? You'd be wild, all right. Capricious, unpredictable . . . absolutely wild.

He looked at the girl. She was leaning beside him, watching the ice chunk into her glass, with a look of placid pleasure. She glanced up. "You've had more than me," she stated.

"That's right," Jed said. He felt perfectly sober. But he wasn't going to have any more liquor, not for a while.

He gave her the drink. He sat down, nursing his warm glass.

He couldn't get rid of the shimmer on his nerves of narrowly missed horror. Nuts, Towers. Forget it. She was careless. She just wasn't thinking what she was doing.

"I guess I wasn't thinking," Nell said, with a delicate shrug.

"Are you a mind reader?" He sagged back on his elbow. "That's a couple of times you've said what I had in my mouth."

She didn't answer.

"But you sure should have put a good hitch on the seat of her trousers or something. Don't you know that's dangerous?" If the future didn't operate in your thinking, you wouldn't even know that word, he thought. Danger wouldn't have a meaning.

If there *was* such a thing as telepathy, why, it would work both ways. If she could catch an idea out of his mind, then he might catch one of hers. Couldn't he. *Hadn't he?* Listen, Towers, don't be any nuttier than you have to be! Mind reading, yet! Fold your tent . . . fade away.

He remembered something. He said, "So you couldn't go dancing on account of the kid?" (So you did feel responsible?)

"Uncle Eddie's on the lift. He'd have caught me, going out," she said placidly.

"Your uncle? Uncle Eddie runs a lift? In this hotel? Oh." Jed turned this information over. "Maybe he got you the job, eh?"

"Yeah," she said with weary scorn, "my wonderful job."

"You don't like it?"

"What's there to like?" she said. And he saw the answer come into her head. He saw it! He *read* it! "There's you, though," Nell was thinking.

He considered, and on the whole he thought he felt relieved. The future tense had operated. Hadn't it? If she thought ahead of her, to Eddie on the lift?

His mind skipped to his own future. Tomorrow morning on the aeroplane. By tomorrow night, a continent away, looking back on a weird evening, which was about over, he judged. Time to go.

His anger was gone. *He* was operating in the future tense, saying to somebody, "And *what* a sitter! What a dame she turned out to be! Nutty as a fruitcake!" he would say.

"Well," he spoke, "Nell, I'll tell you. It might have been fun. We'll never know. So it is to the evening. Bottoms up and then good-bye. See you in South America, some time?"

He grinned. Her eyes were too blue, not in the quality of the blue, but in the quantity. Strange eyes.

"You're not going," she said. It wasn't even a protest. She just said this, as if it were so.

CHAPTER 8

THE UNWRITTEN LAW that links green peas to roast chicken had not been flouted tonight. Peter pointed with his fork and winked. He wasn't really eating.

Ruth could eat no more than he. They picked and pretended. But nobody, she thought, was there for the sake of nourishment. The food marched by, perfectly conventional, so that nothing about it should interrupt the real business of the banquet. Be seen, buzz, bow . . . Oh, it *was* fun!

But now they were nearly past the ice cream. They were at the coffee . . . the end of the line. Peter's conversation with his neighbours had been slowly lessening.

Ruth's nerves tightened alongside his. She let a little ice cream melt in her dry mouth. Peter was taking tiny sips of water, oftener now.

Every once in a while, the buzzing and the bending-to-chat got a

little unreal for Ruth—whenever Bunny came into her mind. It was a little distressing that her vision of Bunny in her bed was shaky and unreal, too. Bunny, she told herself, was sound asleep. Oh, Bunny was real! Warm and beloved, Bunny was there. But those hotel rooms, those formulas, did not wrap her about with the safe sense of being home.

It was a great city, vast and unknown, and the West Side seemed divorced from the East Side, where they were . . . seemed far.

"I'd like to ring back to the hotel pretty soon," she murmured to Peter. "Where are the phones?"

"Saw them as we came through," Peter said. "Round the corner, past those mirrors. . . ." He dabbled in his ice cream.

"Have I time, do you think?" breathed Ruth. They, at the speakers' table, were as far as it was possible to be, away from the telephones. Parade, in my pink, thought Ruth. Conspicuous. Peter could not go, *now*.

The toastmaster shifted in his chair. He sipped his coffee. Ruth felt all Peter's muscles wince. For the toastmaster glanced their way and made a tiny nod.

Imperceptibly, Peter responded. The toastmaster shoved with his hips and his chair began to move backward.

Not now! No time, now! Ruth would call, afterwards. It would be good to call, later, with this tension gone. And all clear. Oh, yes, it would be much better.

There was no doubt that Bunny was sound asleep, anyway. Ruth must now lift her chin and turn her head and listen sweetly to the Speaker of the Evening. (Oh, what was he going to say? Oh, *Peter!*)

Bunny was nine and surely had fallen asleep by this time.

The toastmaster rose like Fate. Ruth released her glass and patted her cold hands together in tune with the crowd. "I am particularly glad," the man said, "to have this opportunity. . . ."

Ruth smiled faintly and let her fingers play with her water glass. She must display the perfect confidence she felt, that under her pounding heart lay so truly sure. . . .

Jed fended her off and it was balm to do so. It was sweet revenge on the whole female race who had loused up his evening. He laughed at her. He had her by the elbows, at arm's length. "It's not that automatic,

toots," he said. "I know. There's a school of thought that says it is. But make a note, why don't you? There is such a thing as being choosy."

Her rage made him laugh and he let himself go back against the headboard. "The time, the place and the girl," he mocked. "I'll choose them all, and this ain't *any* of them, sweetheart."

She looked ready to screech. But then her face closed down, took on that sleepy look. She leaned heavily on his grasp.

"So I'll say so long, Nell," he snapped. "Understand?"

The wild thing about her which, he knew now, had attracted him in the first place, and then made him uneasy, was getting entangled with her will. She wasn't sleepy. Oh, no! Now, he knew that the dreamy look was, on her, a dangerous sign. Maybe a part of her did go to sleep. Maybe it was the part that took into account the future.

He sat up, thrusting her with stiff forearms. He was a little bit sorry for having interrupted himself in that laughter. He said, quietly, "I'm really sorry, but I've got to go. Some other time, Nell."

She didn't seem to hear. Then, she did seem to hear, not his voice, but something less loud and less near.

He heard it, too. There came a discreet tapping on the door of room 807.

Oh-oh! Exit Towers! Jed muttered under his breath, "I'll get out the other way, through the kid's room."

"No." She spoke no louder than he, not a whisper, only a movement of the lips that was nearly mute. "You won't." The words were clear and stubborn on her small mouth.

". . . find me," he said in the same fashion, "you'll lose your job."

The tapping was gently repeated. It would persist, insist. It was patient.

Nell's face lit in malice and delight. "No, no. I'll say . . . you pushed in here. Say you're . . . after me."

Jed's eyes flickered. She would, too. She damn well would! For the sheer wild mischief of it! And, if she did, the benefit of the doubt rests with the female.

"You wait," she said. "I know who it is."

Their almost soundless conversation was taking place in a depth of silence that was uncanny. The room pressed silence round them. The city bayed at the feet of the building, but here, high, they spoke without

voices in a soundless place. Although someone kept tapping in gentle hope upon the door. "Who?" Jed was rigid in alarm.

"It's Uncle Eddie. I can get rid of him."

"I can get out," Jed gestured. His eyes were sombre.

"No." She knew her wild will held him.

"What, then?" He ground his teeth.

"In there. Be quiet." She pointed to the bathroom.

He rose, slowly, letting her go. He could knock her aside. He could get swiftly into the kid's room.

And she could yell. And she was opening her mouth.

Jed stalled, by picking up the bottle and hiding it in his pocket. Quickly, she put his glass into his hand. And then she had him by the elbow. She was pushing, guiding.

The tapping faltered. "Nell?" someone said anxiously.

Nell said, "Who's there?" Her very voice seemed to stretch and yawn. But her eye was watching Jed and her face rippled. She would just as soon cause trouble . . . just as soon as not!

"It's Uncle Ed. You all right?"

Nell's brows spoke to Jed. Twitted him with it. *Well?* they asked. *Am I?*

He growled, voice muted in the bottom of his throat. "O.K. Make it snappy." He went into the bathroom and pushed the door back behind him, not quite tight.

"Gee, I'm sorry, Uncle Eddie. I guess I must have been asleep," he heard her saying.

Towers stood in the bathroom and cursed Towers in his mind. Of all the damned lousy situations. You picked up dames, sure. Every once in a while. On a train. Maybe in a bar. Sometimes a thing like that turned out not bad. If it was sour, you blew. You got out, fast.

How come Towers was hiding behind a door?

He sat on the edge of the tub, to wait, reciting curses, rehearsing in his mind his swift passage out and away.

LYN turned away from the phones. No answer.

I will smoke another cigarette, one more. I will wait until ten more people come in from the street, ten more. I can write a better letter. I know I can. I can try.

CHAPTER 9

EDDIE LOOKED at his niece in negligée and his eyes were disappointed. He said, "I brought the cokes." Disappointment made his voice bleak. He had the bottles in his hands and he went towards the desk and stood there looking down at the tray, the bowl of melting ice, and Nell's glass. "What's this?" An inch and a half of whisky and ginger ale remained in the glass.

Nell said, "You were a long time, Uncle Eddie. I got thirsty. Let me wash that out." She took the glass out of his meek hand. "Mrs. Jones said I could order ginger ale," she said.

"That was nice of her," said Eddie.

Nell pushed in the bathroom door. She went to the wash basin and rinsed the glass.

Not even in the mirror did her eye meet Jed's. There was not a gesture, not a wink, not a sign that she even knew he was there. Jed felt his blood rage. A little grin, a tiny glance, a hint that they conspired to fool this Eddie, would have eased the thing, somehow. But, oh, no! She'd forced him into this ignominy and now she let him stew in it.

Eddie said, "Little girl sleeping? I see you closed her door."

Nell left the bathroom, pulling its door behind her. She would have closed that, but Jed held the inner door.

"Could you hear if she cried or anything?" Eddie was saying.

"The light bothered her," Nell lied calmly.

"Now she's sleeping, though, it won't bother her." Eddie, gentle on the knob, released the catch. "I think Mrs. Jones would rather it was a little bit open, Nell."

"O.K.," she said indifferently. She waited for the coke.

"And it's getting later. It would be better if you took Mrs. Jones's clothes off, Nell. Honest, I thought . . ."

"Gee, I meant to." Nell's fine teeth bit her lip. "I was so kinda comfortable . . . I just didn't hurry. . . ."

At once, Eddie brightened. "Sure you meant to, Nell. I know that. Uh"—he fiddled with an opener. "Why don't you do it now, though?"

"All right, Uncle Eddie." She slipped her feet out of the mules and into her own black pumps. Then she took the ear-rings off, slowly. She

put them into the jewel box. Her fingers began to pick up other things, tidying them, putting them away.

Eddie brightened with his lightening heart. "Good girl!"

She turned her bent head, smiled at him. She rose and her hands worked at the sash of Ruth's gown. Nell said, sounding modest and shy, "I'll just step into the closet."

Her Uncle Eddie took a long relieved pull on his coke bottle.

She came out of the closet in her own rumpled dark dress. It had been a heap on the closet floor for some time. But now Nell made elaborate motions of finicky care as she hung the negligée on a hanger and arranged its folds.

"There," she said, "is that O.K., Uncle Eddie?"

He beamed on her.

"That's fine, Nell." He sighed. "Mightn't be long before they get back, you know. But you're all set."

"We'd better drink our cokes," she said mildly. "It might look better if I was alone in here. Do you think?"

"You're right," he said. "Yes, you're right. I told them I was going to drop in, but it *would* be better if they find everything quiet and you on the job, eh? Well, here you are. You know I want to do everything for you, don't you, Nell?" he blurted.

"I know, Uncle Eddie." She was all meekness.

He took a swig. "Well, it's because I believe in you, Nell. And Aunt Marie does, too." His blink was contradicting the courage in his voice. "I think you'd rather be here with us than back in Indiana."

"Oh, I would," she murmured.

"If the insurance company would have paid on the house and furniture—but as it is, there's nothing left. You know that. So you'd be on some kind of charity till you got a job, and I wouldn't like that for Denny's girl."

"No," she said.

"You know I haven't got much money," he went on. "You can see why it's a good thing if you can . . . kinda get over this trouble pretty soon."

"I'm O.K.," she said without force.

"You're *better*. That's sure."

She was looking at him with that blind blue abstraction she some-

times had. "But they ought to pay," she said. "Why can't we make them pay?"

"I don't know how we can," said Eddie uneasily. "You see, they claim, because the fire was *set*. . . ."

"It was an accident." Her voice went higher. And he cleared his throat nervously. "*Wasn't* it?"

"That's what they said in the court, yes. It was an accident."

Suddenly her face was calm, her glance cold. "So why don't they pay?"

"Well, the insurance company, they think -I tell you, Nell. Might take a lawyer and quite a lot of money and you wouldn't be sure you could win, you see? I think the best thing is, forget about that and try and get started. . . . There wasn't so much insurance. How's the coke?"

"It's good," she said meekly. "Is yours?"

"Fine." He took another swig. It might have been wine, for he seemed to me!low. "You just needed somebody to stand behind you," he said. "Me and Marie knew that, Nell, at the time. And we do stand behind you. We really do. I can understand just why it is you get kinda restless streaks."

"You've been good, Uncle Eddie." Her lips barely moved. But he looked very happy. "It's just that I can see how it is," he said eagerly. "After such a terrible experience, a lot of little things seem pretty *little*. Don't matter much, eh?"

Every fibre of his worried little being was yearning to make contact, to understand and be understood.

The girl didn't look up, but she nodded.

He swallowed and leaned closer. He said softly, "You want to remember, Nell, your father and mother don't blame you. You mustn't ever think that they would. They know you wouldn't ever have done anything bad, Nell . . . not to them. You see, wherever they are, *they* must know that even better than we do. And . . ."

"I don't want to think about them," she said in a perfect monotone. "I don't want to think about them."

"No, no," said Eddie quickly. "Nobody wants to make you think . . . about that. But I been trying to tell you one thing, Nell. The doctor said it would be good if you'd know . . . and here we're so quiet and all, maybe I can say it. Me and your Aunt Marie, we stand behind you. We

don't doubt, for one minute, you set the fire walking in your sleep that night. . . ."

He watched her face. Her lashes flickered. "That's what the court said," she remarked lightly.

"But—but—don't cry," he whispered to the tearless blue of her eyes.

"I'm not going to cry, Uncle Eddie." She turned her empty glass in her fingers. She put it down.

Eddie blinked the tears out of his own eyes. He swallowed the sick flutter of his heart. That Julia his brother married, something about her he had never liked. But surely she'd never been mean to Nell. Denny wouldn't have stood for it. Denny wouldn't be mean to anybody. There could be *no reason*. She was still shocked, poor Nell. She *couldn't* cry. She'd cry, some day. *Sure*, she'd cry.

"Tasted pretty good, didn't it?" he said cheerily.

Jed controlled his rage almost immediately. He'd got into this jam by getting senselessly angry and it was about time, he told himself, that Towers used the brains he was born with. He settled coldly to wait this out.

"And so, I thought," Eddie was saying, "the best idea is for you to start out easy. Take a little job once in a while. The thing is, Nell," he was expounding his creed, "you do something for somebody else and you do a good job. So they're glad to pay you for it. Then you're earning. You're being useful. You'll get into the idea. You'll get over being so restless."

"You told me all this," she said. Her ankle was swinging.

Eddie saw it and silenced himself.

"Going?" she murmured. Her eyes closed.

"I'll take the coke bottles. I don't think the Joneses are going to be so long, now. Couple of hours, maybe. Tired?"

She didn't answer. Eddie rose and the bottles clinked together as he gathered them. She was breathing slowly. "I'll be in the building," he murmured. His eye checked over the room. Everything was in pretty good order. Looked all right. He took up the glass from which Nell had sipped her coke.

Absorbed in his own thoughts, his anxieties, his endeavours, his gains and his losses, Eddie went mechanically towards the bathroom to wash out the glasses.

CHAPTER 10

EVEN BEFORE he met, in the mirror, the little man's shocked and unbelieving eyes, an appraisal of this new situation flooded clearly through Jed's thoughts. The game was up, all right. O.K. But this could be handled.

The mind has an odd ability to play back, like a tape recorder, things heard and yet not quite attended to at the time. Jed knew, immediately, that Eddie could be handled. And that it was a way out for Towers, too.

He knew from what he had overheard that Eddie was by no means sure of his little niece, Nell. Eddie had stuck his neck out, getting her this job. Eddie knew she was unreliable, to put it mildly, although he tried, he struggled, to make himself believe everything was going to be all right. Of course Eddie had taken an awful chance here and Eddie was liable.

All Jed needed to do was use Eddie's self-interest. Very simple. Jed would apologize. Had a couple of drinks, very sorry, sir, he'd say. I'll be leaving now. No harm done.

Jed would make it easy for the other fellow. He'd ask silence as a favour to himself. Eddie could escape by magnanimity the consequences of his own folly. Eddie would be glad to say "good-bye" and only good-bye.

So long, Nell, Jed would say, quietly. And he'd be out of it.

So Jed rose, smiling, knowing he had the power of charm and attractive friendliness when he chose to use it. In the time it took him to rise and open his mouth, the little man had jerked with a mouse squeak and backed towards the door, keeping a frightened face towards Jed's tall figure in the tile-lined gloom. Jed, not to alarm him, stood quietly where he was.

But Nell, like a cat, was lithe lightning across room 807. She had the standing ash-tray, the heavy thing, in her wild hands. She swung it up. Jed's lunge and Jed's upraised arm missed the down-swing. The thing cracked on Eddie's skull. The detachable portion of heavy glass clanged and boomed and echoed on the tile. And Jed said something hoarse and furious and snatched the thing out of her hands cruelly, and Nell jabbered some shrill syllables.

All at once, the noise was frightful.

Only Eddie made no noise. He sank down, very quietly.

There was an instant when everything was suspended. Then the phone began to ring, in 807, and at the same time Bunny's voice screamed terror, in 809.

"Now!" said Jed thickly. "Now, you . . ." He squatted beside the crumpled little body.

Nell turned and walked over to the telephone, which in some freak of time had rung four times already.

"Hello?" Her voice was fuzzy and foggy.

Jed touched Eddie's temple and then his throat.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Jones," Nell said. "I guess I must have been dozing."

There was a pulse under Jed's fingers and he stopped holding his breath.

"She's fast asleep," Nell said, blithely. (And Bunny kept screaming.)

"Oh, no, no trouble at all. Everything's just fine."

Jed, crouching, found himself listening to that voice. It was pretty cool. Just the faintest undertone of excitement. It could pass for enthusiasm. He could feel the child's cries pierce him, and he shuddered.

"Yes, she did. Went right to sleep after her story, Mrs. Jones. I hope you are having a nice time."

Phone to ear, Nell pivoted to see what Jed was doing and one stare was as blank as another.

The kid was frantic in there! Frantic!

"Please don't feel you need to hurry, Mrs. Jones," purred Nell, "because I don't mind—What?"

Her eyes widened as her voice acted surprise. "Noise? Oh, I guess you can hear the sirens down in the street." Her hand clamped on the mouthpiece. She said, through careful fingers, "They're just going by. There isn't any fire near here." She laughed. "Oh, no. You just have a real good time," she advised gaily. She hung up the phone.

"It's a wonder he's not dead," Jed growled. "You little fool!"

"Isn't he?" said Nell absent-mindedly.

She walked into 809.

Jed's hand, going about the business with no conscious command from his numb brain, felt Eddie's head carefully. Couldn't tell what the damage was, but there was, at least, no bleeding.



alexander

Gently, he straightened the body. He lifted it, shifting it all the way over the threshold within the bathroom and, reaching for the thick bath mat, he slid it gently between the hard tile floor and the head. He took a towel and wet it. He washed the forehead gently, the eyes and the cheeks.

Eddie's breathing seemed all right . . . a little difficult, not very. Knocked out, of course, but perhaps . . .

He lifted his own head suddenly.

Bunny was not screaming. The empty air pulsed in the sudden absence of that terrible sound.

Jed sat motionless on his heels. A trickle of sweat cut a cold thread of sensation down his neck.

RUTH stepped with slow grace out of the phone booth. "Have a real good time." Not the *mot juste* for such a night as this! This Night of Triumph! A time to keep in the mind for reference, for ever. Even now, so soon afterwards, it was an hour to live over again, and feel the heart stop, when Peter got up from his chair, and lurch, when he began, so nervously. And pound proudly, because she soon knew that all these politely listening people were warming to the man, who began a little bit shyly.

And then, Peter getting interested himself in what he was saying. First, the words coming out grammatically, properly placed, in full sentences. Then, the thought transcending and driving the grammar into vivid astonishing phrases that rang just right. And, finally, Peter in the full power of his gift, taking from his mind and heart the things he knew and believed.

He was still excited (oh, bless Peter!) and he was reaping his reward. Now that his speech was over, now that they were pushing the tables out of the middle of the floor, and music was playing, and people stood in little groups, and he in the middle of the largest group of all.

A victory! But the rehashing, the wonderful fun of this, might go on for hours.

Ruth turned her bright nails into her palms. Bunny was fast asleep. Everything was fine. The girl had said so.

But Ruth stood, trembling, in the hall of mirrors, and she knew in her bones that everything was *not* fine.

"Don't be silly!" she gasped to her own image. "Don't be such a mother! Don't spoil it now!"

Peter's head craned towards her out of the group, and she gave him a gay little signal of the hand that meant "all's well."

For it must be so.

But that hadn't sounded like the same girl. Oh, it was the same voice. But it was not the same manner. The girl on the phone was neither dull nor passive. *She wasn't stupid enough!* No, she'd been too decisive. Too . . . too darned gay!

She shook herself and walked forward.

"What's wrong, oh, what's wrong where Bunny is?" her bones kept asking.

Peter was in full flight, amplifying something he hadn't touched on quite enough in the speech.

Mer, standing round him, were nodding, and breaking in to quote themselves. "As I said at lunch the other day . . ." "I was saying to Joe . . ." It seemed as if only last week or the other day they'd been telling somebody, in son-of-a-bumbling fashion, that which Peter had just told them so well. (Ah, sweet praise!)

"O.K., hon?" Peter was tuned in on the wave length of Ruth's bones. Often and often he'd heard what they were muttering. But now, when she answered, smiling, "All quiet," Peter didn't hear her bones proclaim, "But I don't believe it."

"Good." He squeezed her, swung her. "Ruth, this is Mr. Evans, and Mr. Childs, and Mr. Cunningham."

"How-de-do . . . how-de-do. . . ."

"Husband of yours has a head on his shoulders and a tongue in his head, Mrs. O.—uh—Mrs. Jones. Fine talk. Fine."

"I thought so, too," said Ruth in sweet accord.

"Isabel, come here. Turn round, want you to meet . . ." The women murmured.

"And how old is your little girl, Mrs. O.—uh—Mrs. Jones?" Isabel was cooing.

"Bunny is nine."

"Ah, I remember Sue when she was nine," said the woman sentimentally. "A sweet age. A darling year."

Ruth smiled, bright-eyed. She had no voice for an answer.

CHAPTER 11

Mrs. PARTHENIA WILLIAMS said, "I can't help it."
"Aw, Ma," her son said, keeping his voice down in the evening hush of the place where they stood. "Listen to me——"

"I can't help it, Joseph, hear?"

For old Mr. and Mrs. O'Hara in the front suite, the Hotel Majestic had somehow, in the inertia of the years, acquired the attributes of home. Now, Mrs. O'Hara wasn't very well, but she wasn't ill enough to warrant a nurse. So Mrs. Parthenia Williams came by day, and sometimes, when Mr. O'Hara had to be away, she remained late in the evening. Whenever she did so, her son, Joseph, came to see her home.

As they stood in the hush of the eighth-floor corridor, Joseph said, "You better keep out of it, Ma. You know that. Don't you?" He was a thin nervous Negro with an aquiline face.

"I know what I know," his mother said.

Mrs. Williams's chocolate-coloured face was designed for smiling, in the very architecture of her full cheeks, the curl of her generous mouth, the light of her wide-set eyes. Nothing repressed her. Nothing could stop her from saying "good morning" in the lifts in her beautiful soft voice. She seemed to acquire through her pores scraps of knowledge about all these strangers, so that she would say, in the corridor, "Did you enjoy the boat trip, ma'am? Oh, that's good!" with the temerity of an unquenchable kindness. Mrs. O'Hara, who was sixty-two and so often annoyingly dizzy, felt at rest on Parthenia's bosom.

Joseph knew his mother's ways and adored her, but some of her ways . . . He tried to protest this time. "Some things you can't—Ma!"

"Something's scaring that baby in there nearly to death," Parthenia said. "She's just a bitty girl. She's in 809 and her folks next door. And I can't help it, Joseph, so don't you talk to me."

Her big feet carried her buxom body down the corridor. "If her folks ain't there, somebody ought to be comforting her. It's not good for her to be so scared."

"Ma, listen. . . ."

"All right, Joseph. Her papa was asking about a sitter and I *know* they were planning to go out. I got to ask. I can't help it."

JED got to his feet. His eyes rolled towards the frosted bathroom window. He unlocked it and pushed it up.

The deep court seemed quiet. He thrust his head through to look down into the chequered hollow. He couldn't, of course, see all the way to the bottom. He couldn't see Bunny's window, either, for it came on a line with this one.

He could see that old biddy across the way and she was walking. She walked to a chair and held to the back of it with both hands and let go with a push and walked away. And back again.

The fear that hadn't been verbalized, even in his mind, seeped away, and he wondered why he was looking out of the window. He wondered if the dame over there was upset because she had been hearing things. He wondered and in the act of wondering he *knew* that someone must have heard the commotion.

Get out of here, Towers, he warned himself, while you got the chance, you damn fool! Before all hell breaks loose. This guy's not going to die. Look out for Towers!

Jed realized that he had a perfect chance, right now. While the wild-cat was in 809, Towers could fade out of 807.

What he heard himself growling aloud, as he stepped over Eddie's body, was, "What in hell is she *doing* in there?"

The knock made him jump. Too late? He groaned. He eyed the distance from where he stood to 809. That would have to be the way out now that someone, and he didn't doubt it was trouble, knocked on 807. How would he get by whoever it was, once in the corridor? He would get by and he'd better.

Then, he saw Nell standing in the way. She looked at him and moved her left hand. It said, "Be still." Jed shook his head and tightened his muscles for the dash. But Nell was swiftly across 807 . . . so swiftly that Jed caught himself and ducked backward again, only just as she opened the door to trouble.

"Yes?" Jed could see her and he cursed, silently, the fantastically cool lift of her chin.

He expected a man's voice, an official voice, cold and final. But the voice was deep music, and not a man's. "I heard the little child crying so bad," it said. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Why, no," said Nell in chill surprise.

"You taking care of the little girl for Miz Jones, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"That's good. You know, I spoke to the little girl and her mama . . . she might know me. I wonder could I comfort her?"

"She's all right now," Nell moved the door. But Parthenia's big foot was within the sill.

"I had so much experience with children. I get along with children pretty well. She was scared, poor child? I hear that."

"Just a nightmare," said Nell indifferently.

"Come on, Ma," Joseph said. "You asked. Now, come *on*."

"Hurts me to hear a baby cry so bad," Parthenia said. "Just hurts my heart like a pain."

"It's none of your business that I can see," said Nell coldly.

"Maybe not," said Parthenia. But her big foot stayed where it was. A big foot, worn with carrying a big body, bunioned and raked over at the heel . . . a big strong stubborn foot. "Maybe not," the lovely voice said sadly, "but I got to try to stop my pain. Can't help trying, ma'am, whatever child is crying."

"She's not crying now," said Nell irritably. "And it's too bad you've got a pain. Please let me close this door, will you?"

"You got a charm for the nightmare?" Parthenia asked.

"If you don't get out of here, I'll call somebody."

"Ma. . . . Excuse us, miss. . . . Ma, come *away*."

"I can't feel happy about it," said Parthenia, softly mournful. "That's the truth. Could I be sure she ain't scared any more?" her soft voice begged. "Little children, being scared sometimes in the night, you got to be sure. Because it hurts their growing if they're not comforted."

"She's comforted," spat Nell. Then she changed. "But thank you for asking," she said in a sweet whine that had a threat in it, somehow. "I guess you mean well. But I really can't ask you in."

Joseph plucked his mother from the doorway roughly.

"Good night, then," Parthenia said forlornly and, as Nell closed them out, "If I was white I wouldn't—"

"Shush!" said her son. "You ought to know better, Ma. We can't fool round that white girl. Believe me, not *that* one!"

"I wasn't fooling. Something's bad wrong, Joseph. Baby's mother's not there. I can't feel happy about it."

"Listen, Ma, you can't stick your nose in that white girl's affairs, if you're right a million times over." He rang for the lift, jittering.

"No child," said Parthenia gravely, as they waited, "no child gets off the nightmare as quick as that. No child, Joseph."

"You can't do anything, Ma. Forget it, can't you?"

The lift stopped. The door slid. Parthenia's enormous foot hesitated. But she stepped in at last, and Joseph sighed.

He heard her mutter, "No, I wouldn't go. I'd make a fuss. I wouldn't go."

CHAPTER 12

". . . niggers!" said Nell.

All of a sudden all Jed's cool purpose to depart was burned up in the flame of his raging need to tell her off.

"You damn wild-cat! What's the idea of swatting him down like that? What in hell did you think you were doing?"

He shook her. The dark dress was too short. Also, it was cut to fit a more matronly body. So she looked younger and less sophisticated, but also older and dowdier. Her head went back on her neck, as a snake's head poises to strike, and her tiny mouth over the sharp tiny chin looked venomous.

"Answer me!"

She was angry. "What's the matter with you?" she cried. "You didn't want to be seen. Well? He was walking right in there."

"So you'd just as soon murder the man, eh? Just for walking? So you don't care whether he lives or dies?"

"He's not going to die," she said scornfully. "I didn't hit him so hard."

"You hit him as hard as you could. Just luck you didn't. . . ."

"Did you want to be seen?" she hissed.

"So you did *me* a favour? Don't do me any more." He flung her to one side of him, holding both her wrists in one hand. It crossed his mind that time was sifting by. It began to look as if no one had sounded any alarm. Nothing was happening. He yanked her along as he went to peer through the window blinds. The dame across the court was just standing there. He could see her hands on the back of that chair.

He swung Nell back into the centre of the room. She stumbled, unresisting, although she looked a little sullen. She said, "I thought you didn't want him to see you."

"So, you shut his eyes. That's logical. That's great!" Jed took his hands off her as if she would soil them. "But I'm still going. I'm going faster and farther, if that's possible. And don't think you can frame me with any lying yarn," he stormed. "I'll be gone," he snapped fingers, "like smoke! You don't know who I am, and you'll never see me again in this world, Nelly girl."

She said nothing. But she moved a little bit, working round, he thought, to put herself between him and the door. He laughed. "Single track, your mind. One-idea-Nell. One at a time is all you can handle? Listen, you never had a chance to keep me here since I found out you were a baby-sitter. Never."

"Why not?" she said.

"Say I'm allergic," said Jed shortly, "and skip it. I've got nothing against kids." His hand chopped the air nervously. "That's got nothing to do with it. They let me alone, I let them alone. Nothing to me." He didn't like this line. He shifted, quickly. "Start thinking about yourself and think fast, Nell. How *you're* going to get out of the jam you got yourself into, I couldn't say."

"I'll get out of it," she murmured carelessly.

He didn't hear. He was listening for something else. "It's quiet in there," he muttered.

"She's all right," said Nell.

"What did you tell her?"

"I told her nothing to be scared of. Somebody just fell down." Suddenly Nell laughed, showing her teeth. "Somebody *did*."

"How true," said Jed thoughtfully. He stepped round one of the beds and looked into the bathroom. "Eddie's going to be missed, you know. Naturally, you didn't think of that."

"He won't be missed," she said indifferently. "He's off duty." She sat down and put her ankles together and looked at her feet. Her toes made a miniature *chassé*.

Eddie was about the same, still out, breathing better.

Nell fell back on her elbows, smiling up. "Take me dancing?" she said coquettishly. "Johnée?"

"Dancing!" he exploded.

"Uncle Eddie's not on the lift now." She seemed to think she was explaining something!

He wanted to say, I'd just as soon take a cobra dancing. But he said, "And? Who sits with the baby, in the meantime?"

"It's a silly job," she said. "I don't like it."

His lips parted, closed, parted. He sat down, facing her. It seemed necessary to try to cut through a wall of fog, to clear things up. "You're in a mess," he said, rather patiently. "Don't you know that?"

"What mess?" She was sulky.

"You club this guy, this Uncle Eddie. O.K. Now, what's going to happen? Look ahead a little bit. The Joneses come home from the party. There's a body in the bathroom. What will you say?"

"It's only Uncle Eddie," she murmured.

Jed took his head in his hands. He meant to make a semi-humorous exaggeration of the gesture, but it fooled him. He really was holding his head.

"Now, listen carefully," he said. "What's *going* to happen? Future tense. Consequences. You ever heard of them?"

She used a word that rocked him with the unexpectedness of its vulgarity. "—, Uncle Eddie isn't going to say it was *me* who hit him."

He had to admit that he himself had reasoned along this line. For a moment, he was stopped. "O.K.," he resumed patiently. "So Eddie won't tell on you. Then what *is* the story? Did he knock himself out? What did knock him out? Who?"

"I can say you did it," she answered placidly.

"*After I'm gone*, you'll say it!" He was furious.

"Unless we're out dancing."

He stood up. This time he spat it out of his mouth. "I'd just as soon take a cobra dancing as you."

"You asked me when you first——"

"*Then*," he snapped. "That was before I knew what I was getting into." He looked down coldly. "I think you're insane."

It's easy to say. The word falls off the tongue. This was the first time Jed had ever said it in perfect sincerity.

She lifted her head on the neck, slowly. It was the neck that lifted as if it uncoiled. She said a few ugly words. Then she was screeching and

clawing at him and biting his self-defending hands with savage teeth and her shrill refrain was, "No, I'm not! No, I'm not! Take it back! You take it back!"

He handled her, but it wasn't easy. He got her in a locking hold and he shut her mouth with his hand. "Cut it out! You'll scare the kid. You'll have cops in here."

She was still screeching, as well as she could, "Take it back!"

"O.K., O.K. I take it back. Cut it out!"

She cut it out. She seemed satisfied. It was necessary to her that the word should not be used. The word "insane." But it was a matter of words. The words "I take it back" were just as potent. Which, thought Jed grimly, is insane.

He felt chilled. He did not want this to be true. She was a crazy kid, a wild kid, in the slang sense. She was limp in his hold. Then he knew she was not so limp but too happy to be held so tightly.

He loosed her, warily. He said, vaguely, "Why should we fight? Makes too much noise." He listened. There was no sound from the child's room and he let out his breath. "Good thing *she* didn't begin to howl again. I can't take any more of that."

Nell said, "I know." A flicker of contempt crossed her face. "I understand about the future," she muttered.

"I talk too much, sometimes." He was trying to be careful. "What I need. . . . Finish the bottle with me?" He took it out of his pocket. "Good thing this didn't get smashed in the excitement." He tipped the bottle.

She took it from him with both hands. The notion of drinking out of the bottle seemed to tickle her.

He said, "Say, where did the Joneses go?"

"Why?" Her voice was as careless as his.

"I was wondering how late. . . . Was it a theatre? Or a party somewhere?" He feigned relaxing.

She still had the bottle in both hands. Carrying it, she walked between the beds and sat down near the head of one of them. "I don't know," she said vaguely.

"A party in somebody's apartment?"

"Your turn." She gave him the bottle. Her face was full of mischief. She said, "I understand about the future, Johnnee. Everybody does."

"I guess so," Jed said.

She took a slip of paper off the table between the beds where the phone was. She began to pleat it in her fingers. "You think I'm stupid?" she asked, looking sideways.

"Everybody's stupid, sometimes. Looks kinda stupid of the Joneses not to say where they'd go. What if the kid got ill?"

"Oh?" Nell said brightly. "You mean they should have thought ahead? About the future?"

"Did I say something about the future, ever?" He grinned.

Nell tore the paper idly into fancy bits. When Jed passed over the bottle she let the bits fall on the carpet. Too late, Jed saw them fall. He received, in a telepathic flash, the news. What had been on the paper. Why she had torn it. How she had foxed him. And the news of her sly laughter.

He was chagrined. He kept himself from showing it, he hoped, and from anger. In the morning, at the desk downstairs, he comforted himself, where the kid's parents went. He said, and perhaps this was the result of the damped-down anger, "Say, what was this about a fire?"

"Fire?" Nell smoothed the bedspread. She cocked her head. She seemed willing to talk about fire if that's what he wanted to talk about. It didn't mean anything to her.

"I got a little bit of what your Uncle Eddie was saying."

"Oh, that."

"Was it your house burned? Your parents? I thought he said so." She didn't answer. "Upset you, Nell?"

"That's what they say," she said demurely.

"Who?"

"Oh, doctors. Uncle Eddie. Aunt Marie." She frowned.

"Where was the fire?"

"Home."

"Some small town, was it?"

"It wasn't big." She curled up her legs.

Small, all right, Jed thought to himself, if they let this one loose. But he said to himself quickly, No, no, there must have been some testing. His thoughts went on. Probably, Eddie showed up ready and willing and anxious to take her far, far away. Nell wouldn't be any of the town's business, far, far away.

"So it was an accident," he said, making a statement. "Well, I'll tell

you something. The future's one thing you got to look out for. The past is another. Because the past adds up. You know that?"

She frowned.

"This accident. Your father and mother both died in it?"

"It was an accident." He heard the jump of her voice to a higher pitch. He knew it was a threat. It warned, Look out! It reminded him of that screeching tantrum.

"Well, I'll tell you," he drawled, nevertheless, "and it's a funny thing. You take one accident, why, that's too bad. Everybody's sorry. Poor Nell." She was curled up as tense as a coiled spring. He tried to fix her gaze, but it was all blueness. He kept on drawling, "But you take *two* accidents, that's different. That's not the same. It's really funny, how, after a second accident, right away, the first accident doesn't look so much *like* an accident any more."

Her face went blank, either because he'd hit her with an idea, or she didn't know what he was talking about.

"Good thing to keep in mind," he said lazily. "You better not have any more accidents."

She didn't move. He thought, *I got it over.*

He gathered himself to get up now, and go quietly.

MISS EVA BALLEW believed in many things. One of them was duty. She walked towards the telephone. One of them was justice. She walked back to the chair.

But however strong her beliefs and her conscience, Miss Ballew was a physical coward and knew it. She couldn't seem to make up her mind what she ought to do. Sometimes, if you take time to decide, the need to do anything passes by itself. . . . Miss Ballew reproached herself with bitter shame and she walked towards the phone. . . . But

She walked to the chair. She banged her fist on the chair back and the pain helped her. Very well. She would do her duty and deny her cowardice. She went to the chest of drawers and got her handbag, not to be naked without it, once away from her room. She left the room and marched round the hollow square of the eighth floor.

Nell hadn't moved. Jed, all the way up, standing, said, "So long." He felt a pulse of compassion for her, who was lost and had no inner compass to find the way again. "Be seeing you."

Once more, and briskly, somebody's knuckles knocked on 807's door. Nell was up, lynx-eyed.

"Oh no," said Jed softly. "Oh no, my lady, not again!"

He faded. Towers faded, the way he had to go, through the door to the kid's room, to 809 . . . and closed it behind him.

CHAPTER 13

MISS BALLEW rapped again. Because she was afraid, she did her best to be angry. She knew someone was in there. Did they think they could lie low?

The door opened so swiftly it surprised her. A girl in a dark dress, not a very big girl, not very old, looked at her with blue, blue eyes and said, with an effect of stormy anger, although her voice was low, "What do you want

"My name is Eva Ballew. My room is across the court on this floor." Miss Ballew's words were as neat and orderly as herself. She tended to begin at the beginning.

"Yes." The girl seemed to listen but not to hear, almost as if she were listening for something else. And it seemed to Miss Ballew that her anger was aimed elsewhere, also.

"Before I call the manager," said Miss Ballew more boldly, "I think it only fair to ask whether you can explain."

"Explain what?"

"What is going on in these rooms," said Miss Ballew, loudly and firmly.

"I don't know what you mean." The girl was looking at the caller but not seeing her, almost, thought Miss Ballew, as if she were *also* watching for someone else.

"There is a child," said Miss Ballew coldly. "Is she your child?"

"I'm taking care of her."

"I see." Miss Ballew's mouth was grim. "Yes, so I imagined. Is there or was there a man in here?"

"A man?"

Miss Ballew longed to cry, Pay attention, please! "I saw the man," she announced, sharply, "so that is an unnecessary question and you need not answer it." She could see into room 807 and no one else was

visible, at least. She did not feel physically afraid of rather a small girl. And if the man had gone . . . Miss Ballew was encouraged. She said, "Who was the man?"

"Listen, you can't——"

"The child," cut in Miss Ballew coolly, "has been crying in a most distressing manner, twice. And I have witnessed certain rather strange scenes over here. I must ask for an explanation."

"But why should you?" Nell stepped closer, with the door behind her now. Her glance slipped down the corridor to the right, briefly.

"Because," snapped Miss Ballew, "it seemed to me, for one thing, that the little girl very nearly fell out of the window."

"Well, she didn't," said Nell carelessly. "While you were at your snooping you must have noticed that."

Miss Ballew bridled but stood her ground. "Snooping or not, I wish to see the child."

"See her?" For the first time, Miss Ballew felt that her words were heeded. "You've got a nerve!"

"Nevertheless, if I do *not* see her, I intend to call the authorities." So much for rudeness, Miss Ballew's eyebrows remarked. "Why did she scream?" Miss Ballew narrowed her eyes.

"When?"

"The second time. Come now, stop evading, young woman."

"What?"

"I think you'd better let me in."

"*You* listen," Nell said. "I'm here to take care of her. You're a stranger. How do I know . . . ?"

"You don't," agreed Miss Ballew, "but unless I see her for myself, the manager or the detective here *must*."

"What business is it of yours? I don't underst——"

"Are you afraid to let me see her?"

"I'm not afraid," said Nell shrilly. "But I can't do it. I'm not supposed to. You talk about duty——"

"Now, see here. I am a schoolteacher. I'm sure I look like one. You ought to be able to tell that I'm a responsible person."

"You're trying to cause trouble."

"On the contrary. I could have called downstairs direct. I felt, however, that it was not fair to cause trouble, as you say, if there is no reason.

If the child is perfectly all right and asleep, then there is no occasion for any trouble at all. Is that clear?"

"What would her mother say if I let in any old person?"

"What would her mother say about your entertaining a man?" In the same tone, Miss Ballew would have said "about your smoking opium."

"He's gone." The girl's eyes flickered towards the right again. "And she *is* perfectly all right. She *is* sleeping."

"I beg your pardon if I seem to insist in the face of your direct statements, but after what I saw——"

"Saw?"

"Perhaps you don't know that the Venetian blind was so adjusted that I *could* see."

"See where?" Nell's head went back on the neck.

"Into the child's room."

"It's dark in there," Nell said stupidly. Perhaps a little drowsily.

"Not quite. There was a very little light, perhaps through the connecting door."

"Light?"

"And the child did stop her screaming rather abruptly," said Miss Ballew.

Nell's eyes slipped sideways. "What did you see?" she asked.

RUTH was only half listening to the women's voices. She would have preferred to be in the group of men where the talk, she was sure, must have more meat in it. These women, from far-flung spots, had no basis for gossip and, since they weren't even sure who each other's husbands were (except Ruth's, of course), they didn't even have the fun of ranking each other.

Except Ruth. She could have been preening herself. But her heart wasn't in it. Some sense of danger fluttered her heart.

Peter strode out of his group to dance with her. "Smatter, hon? Worried? About Bun?"

"I'm sure I'm silly."

"Did something in that phone call bother you?"

"I don't know." She slid her hand higher on his sleeve. "Probably it's just because I'm a booby and this great big town scares me. Listen, Peter, even if I don't always behave like it, I am a grown woman. Let me take

a cab over to the hotel and see, and I'll come straight back and dance till dawn."

"We could leave now," he said.

"But . . . the fun!"

He grinned, admitting the fun. "Man from Chicago I'd like to have a few words——"

"Then do. Please. If you go, I'll feel terrible. *You* can't go."

"My night to howl," he grinned. "Got cab fare?" He would let her go. Peter wouldn't *make* her spoil it.

"Not a penny," she confessed.

He danced her into the mirrored exit, squeezed her, let her go, and gave her a five-dollar bill. "Don't trust any handsome strangers with all this cash on you, baby."

"I won't." Ruth thought, I don't trust that stranger, that girl. It's what's wrong with me.

Ruth smiled at him. She left the scene. She felt, at once, much better to have escaped, to be going.

A doorman found her the cab. The city thought nothing of a young woman in evening clothes taking a cab alone in the night. The city minded its own business.

CHAPTER 14

JED STOOD in the dark. He heard Miss Ballew introduce herself and knew at once *this* was the old biddy from across the way. Through the slats of Bunny's blind he could see her room.

He wondered if he were going to be able to get round the two of them out there without an uproar.

He rehearsed his exit in his mind.

And he meant exit. Total exit. There were worse things in the world than sitting the night out at the airport.

The stairs went down, he knew, just beyond the lifts. Well, he could move fast on his long legs. In his mind, he placed all the stuff in his room. He could be in and out of that room, he thought, in a matter of sixty seconds, and exit bag and baggage. Then let her screech her lies.

He had little doubt she'd cook up some lies, all right. If necessary. Or even just if it seemed like fun at the moment.

Unless his warning words had knocked a totally unfamiliar idea of caution into her head. Of course, he'd been thinking of the kid. He'd been trying to get into Nell's head the danger, the undesirability, of harming the kid.

So that Towers could fade, of course.

Damn it, Towers had to get out of this! A fine mess! Assault, maybe, on account of Eddie in there, and the benefit of the doubt on Nell's side. And Eddie, tempted, if not almost obliged, to say something hit him but he doesn't know what. Eddie could even kid himself that it was true.

So there's Towers, in a jam. Nuts! He had to get out of here. Never *was* any business of his, the kid and the sitter. If the parents didn't know any better . . . Probably didn't give a damn what happened to the kid, he thought angrily. Off to a party, all dressed up. Probably drunk as *stinks* by now and painting the town. Why should Towers care?

Why should he be so angry about it?

He still stood, just inside room 809, still listening. He didn't know what he was waiting for. That old biddy had her teeth in it now. Listen to her. "I wish to see the child." Sounded like a pretty stubborn old dame. Well, let her do it. She was the type to do it. The kid was none of his business.

He might drop a word at the desk on his way out, though. He could have heard a commotion over here from his own room. The old biddy had, from hers. Just as well tip the hotel. Then Nell *couldn't* stall her.

His eyes had adjusted to the dark in here. He could see the far bed was undisturbed. On the other, the kid must be asleep.

Funny thing she didn't wake up during his late wrestling match with the wild-cat. It hadn't been a silent one.

That bed was awfully flat.

His hair moved with his scalp.

He crept a few steps in room 809. Of course, she was an awfully little girl, wouldn't make much of a hump on a bed. He didn't know. He'd hardly ever *seen* a sleeping child. He didn't know if they made a hump or not.

There wasn't any little girl on the bed.

He looked at the windows and Towers was sick and sickness was

going through him like cream swirling down through a cup of coffee and something thumped on the floor.

He knelt in the dark crevice between the beds. He felt, blindly. Something threshed. He wanted light but he didn't dare. His fingers found a thin chilly little . . . what? Shoulder? Yes, for he touched a soft braid. He felt for the face, the warm lips and the breath, but touched, instead, fabric.

Damn her to hell, she'd bound and gagged the little thing!

"Bunny?" he whispered. "Aw, Bunny, poor kid. Listen, I wouldn't hurt you for a million dollars." His fingers verified. Yes, her ankles were tied together. Wrists, too. And that cruel—stocking, he guessed it was, in and over the mouth!

"You fall off the bed, honey? Aw, I'm sorry. Mustn't make a noise, though."

Oh, Lord, how would the child *not*! if he ungagged her. It was not possible for her not to cry! He knew this. She must cry out, must make sound as soon as she was able.

But she mustn't! Or Towers would never get away.

Now, what could he do? Thoughts flashed like frightened goldfish in the bowl of his brain.

Grab her, just as she was? Take her with him? Yeah, and run past the two women at the other door with the kid slung over his shoulder. A kidnapper, yet! Fantastic!

He sat on his heels. His hand tried to comfort the little girl, smoothing her hair. He thought, "So you're in a jam, Towers?"

But then his mind went all fluid again and he thought, Damn it, no! He thought, I've got to arrange things for the kid and get out, too!

Look out for yourself, Towers! Nobody else will. It came back to him, in his own words. A guide, a touchstone.

All right! Use your head! Nothing was going to happen to the kid beyond what already had. The woman out there would keep Nell busy. And he, Jed, would tip off the hotel. So, for five minutes' difference, five minutes more. . . .

He leaned over and whispered, "I'm afraid you'd cry if I undo your mouth, honey. I wouldn't blame you. I'm just afraid you can't help it. We can't make any noise, just yet. Listen, I'm going. Going to get

somebody. Get your daddy." His hand felt the leap of the little heart. "I am a friend," he said, absurdly, out of some pale memory in a boy's book.

He got up and went softly to the door of 809.

CHAPTER 15

"I saw," said Miss Ballew in her precise fashion, "the child, as I suppose, sitting up in the bed and a figure approach and appear to struggle with her. The cries then stopped, most abruptly. So you see, I require," said she hastily, "some explanation. I cannot believe," she added vehemently to cover the shake that was developing in her voice, "that any grown person would use force on a child. What, actually, were you doing?"

Nell looked copy.

"If it wasn't you, who was it?" said Miss Ballew angrily.

"You said you *saw*—" There was hint of impudence in the girl's face, something saucy that must be crushed at once.

Miss Ballew said coldly, "I certainly did see *someone* doing *something*, which has very much alarmed me. I would advise you, young woman, to take me to that child at once." (But she was afraid again. She was dizzy with her fear.)

A door, to her left and the girl's right, opened and closed very fast. A man was in the corridor and had passed rapidly behind Miss Ballew almost before she could turn her head. He rushed on, he vanished round the corner. Miss Ballew staggered in the wind of his passage. It had been so swift, so startling, so furtive, and there had been a white roll of his eye.

"Who was that!" Her knees felt mushy.

The girl looked as if she could hop with rage, as if she would begin to bounce, like popcorn.

"Explain, at once!" cried Miss Ballew and reached out to shake this stupid creature.

The girl collapsed at her touch. "Oh, oh," she said "Oh—" and bent her arm against the door-frame and buried her face in her arm. "Oh, I was so scared! Oh, miss, whatever's your name. Oh, thank you! You've saved me!"

"What!"

"That . . . man!" said Nell, muffled.

"Why, he must have come out of the next— Yes, I see he did! Out of the child's room!"

"Yes. Yes," cried Nell. "Now do you see? He was in there all the time. He said if I didn't get rid of you . . . Oh!"

"Oh, dear," said Miss Ballew faintly.

"He said he would—" Nell's body pressed on the wood as if in anguish.

Miss Ballew rocked on her feet and reached for the wall.

"He just forced himself in here. He was so wild," Nell cried, "and strong!" Her face peeped now, from the sheltering arm. "I didn't know what to do!"

Silence beat in the corridor while Miss Ballew fought with her wish to fall down. One heard, one read, and all one's life one feared, but not often did one encounter. . . . But the ruthless predatory male was, of course, axiomatic.

"There wasn't anything I could do." The girl's whine broke the spell. "I couldn't—I'm not very strong."

"But he is getting away!" moaned Miss Ballew. For she heard, in the mists of her horrors, the yawn of the door to the fire-escape stairs and the hish-hush of its closing. This, she felt, was outrageous. Outrageous! That such things . . . in a respectable hotel . . . and go unpunished! The anger was starch to her spine. She tightened her mouth, gathered her strength and bustled past the girl into the room. She threw her stout sturdy form on the bed and reached for the telephone.

Downstairs, Rochelle Parker shifted the Life Saver expertly into the pouch of her cheek. "Yes?"

"This is Miss Ballew," said the agitated voice. "I'm in room—what?" she cried to the girl. "What is this number?"

"Number 807," said the girl quite promptly and calmly.

"Room 807. A man has just fled from here."

"*What* did he do, madam?"

"Fled. He ran away." Miss Ballew was often forced to translate her remarks. "He was up to no good." She tried to be basic. "Get him!" cried Eva Ballew.

"Just a moment, *please*," said Rochelle. She pressed the button that

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